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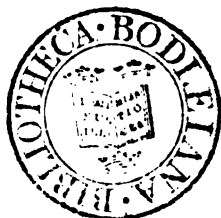
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THE
HEIRS OF CHEVELEIGH.

7 CHAPTER I.

"Forlorn and sad, the livelong day
We journeyed forth upon our way."
HOMER, *Odys.* 10. 133.

FROM a mass of letters and other documents in the possession of Mrs. Gresford, the married sister of Harcourt's to whom we have already referred, and his deeply interested *confidante* and adviser throughout the love passages we have been describing, we select the following as supplying some necessary links in the connection of events. It will only be necessary to premise that the correspondence commences in the year following that which witnessed the close of our last chapter, and, as the

reader will see by the date of the first letter, after an interval of nearly eleven months.

No. I.

*Letter from Edgar Harcourt to Mrs. Gresford, of
Woodperry House, Berkshire.*

“Chillingworth Parsonage,
“24th August, 18—.

“My dearest Emily,

“I have delayed answering your kind letter for some days; I hardly know why; but this will probably be the last letter to which I shall ever put this address, and I had a sort of feeling that I wished it to be to yourself. Mr. Freer (I don't think I have yet mentioned to you the name of my father's successor) arrives to-morrow to make the preliminary arrangements for his family coming in next month, and the house is now entirely dismantled. I am writing at the kitchen table, which I think is the only article of furniture left here, and with the cook's pen and inkstand, which must be my apology for any short-comings in that line. To night I dine and sleep at Mr. Hewson's, and then leave for Westmoreland, where I shall probably spend a week or two, taking my friend Palgrave's for a day or so *en route*.

“Dear old Chillingworth! What memories it will always have for us two, Emily! I dare say I shall never see it again; or, if I do, that everything will be changed. But still I believe that, to my dying day, I shall never forget some of the associations connected with it. I do not mean the mere general features, such as the quiet churchyard entirely shut in with our walls, and Mr. Hewson’s; the parsonage, with its porch and creepers; the quaint tower and yew-trees, and other points which an *artist* would select for a sketch. What I mean is of a more microscopic character; little trifles in our young time together there with our dear father, wholly unimportant in themselves, but which, for some strange reason or other, stand out in relief from the past, as fresh and vivid as if they had occurred only yesterday; while incidents of far more real consequence are wholly forgotten. I always fancy that the sense of *smell* is connected with more of these associations than any other almost. I can bring back, as if it were still before me, the smell of the deal bench that was always brought in for us and the servants to kneel at prayers with; and do you remember, Emily, the faint scent of the large jar of pot-pourri in the drawing-room? I have never entered that room (alas! it looks so

dreary now) without its bringing our dear mother most vividly before me, although it is so many years since she died. I forget what the connection was; perhaps I was meddling with the jar, and got scolded for it (as far as that sweet face and voice could scold); but, however this may be, there has never been anything else, not even that night when she died, which I well remember, that has brought her before me so forcibly; almost with the startling distinctness one can fancy the figures appearing in the magician's glass, of which I used to read in that old story-book about Cornelius Agrippa—another of my undying memories. However, it is all past now, and I am a homeless wanderer; although, indeed, I ought not to say so, after the thorough home your kindness and George's have always made Woodperry to me. After the vacation, too, I shall have my fellowship, most probably, and that will help to domesticate me at Oxford. Dear Lucy, this is one of the things I owe to her unselfish nature: you remember the promise she extorted from me, and how, at the end of that last terrible letter, evidently written in such bitter grief and despair, she reminded me of it, and claimed its fulfilment. It was a hard struggle, and nothing but the fact that it *was* her last request, moved me to do it; but still

I did go through the necessary work for my degree, and now I feel most grateful for it. Had it not been for the force which this obliged me to put upon myself, I am quite sure that after my last wretched visit to Plas Newydd, and the weeks of agony and mental and bodily prostration which followed, I should hardly have retained my senses. My brain was seething, at times I was almost delirious. I fear, indeed, I was worse. Instead of showing my love to Lucy by following the pattern of submission and trust her gentle nature had set me, I was tempted, in my frantic moods, almost to curse my being; I have shuddered once or twice, as I *felt*, that if the means of doing so had been present, I should have perished, miserably and wickedly, by my own hand. It was nothing but her gentle pleading voice that rescued me from this state. It seemed to me, one evening particularly, as if she came and stood by me, with her own bright sweet smile, and showed me the postscript to her last letter, adding (I really seemed all but to hear her voice), ‘I always intend to keep *my* promise; I shall never love any one but you, Edgar; but you must rouse yourself, or we shall both be lost.’ Of course it was a mere fancy; but it certainly had the effect of making me take to my books again; grinding, heart-breaking work that it

was; but I feel that it has saved me. And one good result is, that (besides enabling me to be of some comfort, I hope, to my poor father in his last moments, which I could not have been otherwise, and to arrange all this business afterwards) the return to some occupation, by forcibly diverting the mind into other channels, has given it elasticity and firmness. I can *now* see my way clearly. Never, indeed, will I for a moment give up dear Lucy; I could sooner part with life itself. On the contrary, I feel more and more every day how intensely I love her; and I am determined, even at the risk of disobeying her, at least to discover her present place of residence, and, whether I am permitted to see her or not, to ascertain that she is safe and well. But I feel that, whereas before I should have set to work blindly and impetuously, now I can bring my mind to bear calmly on the subject; treating it, not as the result of some frantic impulse, but as the settled purpose of my life. And somehow I cannot help cherishing a kind of presentiment that better times are in store for us, even independently of this recent piece of good fortune,—which, by the way, I see I have actually written thus far without mentioning: I fear, after all, you will think my faculties not so much restored as I suppose. What I have to tell you is

about Mrs. Witherby, and with that is connected my trip to the Lake district. You know that ever since I was able to act or think at all for myself, after those terrible three months which succeeded my last wretched visit to Plas Newydd, I have been trying to discover some trace of Lucy and her family, but hitherto, quite without success. Every avenue seemed literally barred; there was nothing whatever which could furnish me the least clue to their movements or present abode. My only chance would have been Mrs. Witherby, but unhappily I omitted to learn her address from Lucy (as I intended to do) the day we parted, and even this solitary ray of hope, such as it was, seemed excluded. It was only the day before yesterday, however, that at the rectory at Ampthill, where I was dining, I singularly enough met with the very information I was in quest of. I forget what led to it, but in the course of conversation at dinner I accidentally heard the name of Witherby mentioned by a lady who was present. She was a stranger to me, but when we came into the drawing-room, I procured an introduction to her, and on comparing notes, soon found that this was the very person of whom I was in quest. My informant, Miss Rickards, was only slightly acquainted herself with Mrs. Witherby, whom she had for

the first time met at the house of a mutual friend a month or two since. Her description, however, of her person and manner quite tallied with my own; moreover she distinctly recollected Mrs. Witherby more than once mentioning the name of Akehurst, so that there can be no reasonable doubt of the identity. Mrs. Witherby lived, Miss Rickards said, somewhere in Bedfordshire, but she did not know the address; she could, however, easily procure it from her friend, and this, at my request, she promised to do. Afterwards, however, it occurred to me that it might expedite matters if I got Miss Rickards to enclose a letter from me to be forwarded to Mrs. Witherby. Accordingly I wrote yesterday a few earnest lines to the good old lady, telling her of my deep trouble, and conjuring her, if she knew anything of Lucy, at once to let me hear; I faithfully promised her, at the same time, that I would not make any use of the information I might thus obtain, excepting with her express sanction. This letter I took over myself to Ampthill, where Miss Rickards is on a visit; she readily undertook to forward it, and I am now awaiting the result. As there will probably be some days of cross posts, &c., and I am both head and heart tired with the grief of our poor

father's death, and the business arrangements it has involved during the last month, I have decided, as I said (being now turned out of the old house), to go up to the Lakes for a few days. —dale, people say, is a quiet and very beautiful spot, and I have decided on staying there until Mrs. Witherby's answer comes, which I requested her to address to me at the hotel there; my movements afterwards are uncertain. So now you know my present plans.

"I must close this tremendous letter, which I see is all about myself and my own grief; but I know, Emily dear, your kindness will forgive this, even although you have heard the oft-repeated tale twenty times over. With kind love to George, and kisses to the children,

"Ever your affectionate brother,

"EDGAR HARCOURT.

"P.S.—My Chillingworth letters will be sent on to —dale, and you can direct there too, please. If there is any thing pressing meanwhile, you can write to me at Palgrave's; you know his father's address."

No. II.

The same to the same.

"The Elms, near Preston,

"29th August.

"Dear Emily,

"Your letter is just come in. I can only send a hurried answer, as I am going northward by to-night's mail. I am sorry that you and George have had so much trouble with Wingrave about that business. I will write to you more fully about it from —dale; meanwhile, the short points to be attended to are as follows I am not sure where I shall go after Mrs. Witherby's letter comes. Palgrave has a plan for Switzerland and Venice the week after next, in which I should like to join him; but every thing of course will depend on what I hear. Good-bye for the present.

"Yours affectionately,

"EDGAR HARCOURT.

"P.S.—I will keep a journal of my visit to the Lakes, as you wish it; perhaps, as you say, I may stay on there, but it is quite uncertain. You will find it, however, very different from my old Welsh journals, which you and George were good-natured

enough to find interesting. I have no heart for any thing now."

Mr. Edgar Harcourt appears to have kept his promise to his sister, for among the collection of documents already mentioned, we found, in a rapid but legible hand, some sketches, arranged in the form of a journal, of that gentleman's residence at the Lakes, in the year 18—, from which we proceed to furnish a few extracts.

No. III.

Extracts from Journal of Mr. E. Harcourt.

Wednesday, 29th Aug. — Mail to Ambleside. Nothing but an inside place vacant. Slept passably, but aggravated by the proceedings of my opposite neighbour, a bony female, who not content with projecting herself into my lap at intervals during the night, added, from time to time, some rather strong observations as to people who wouldn't keep their own places inside a coach. Morning broke on Kendal; a pleasant country town, then lying fast asleep in its green hollow, with the white mists beginning to curl up from the stream, and the warm light falling on the smooth grassy slope of the

castle hill (which overhangs the town), and the bold mountains in the distance.

Thursday, 30th Aug.—Walked in the last few miles to Ambleside; a lovely morning walk, bright with dew, gossamer, and sunshine, the road winding through woods and between knolls, and at last emerging on stately Winandermere, with its green meadows and smooth broad lake, and the tall, solemn mountains round it; the belt of mist hanging half way down them, their scarped cliffs glowing in the sunlight above. Thought of the living and the dead, who would have loved the fair scene with me.

Friday, 31st Aug.—At —dale. No letter, either yesterday, or to-day, as I half hoped there might have been. Hired a boat, and skiffed lazily about the lake all day. The upper part is wild and gloomy, hemmed in by the cliffs of Helvellyn and Fairfield; the lower soft and riant; there are some four or five small islands, rocky, and covered with shrubs and flowers. Explored these, lying about in the small coves of the rocks, and penetrating into odd corners of the lake, until it was time to think of turning homewards. There was a bright blue sky, and warm sun, in which the tiny ripple of the lake sparkled like jewels; I always fancy, that to a more refined ear than ours, these coruscations

of the gleaming waters would chime musically like soft bells. Found on landing that the boat's name was "Lucy."

Saturday, 1st Sept.—A warm fine day for the guns. Again no letter; tried to amuse myself with hotel sights and sounds. — dale is just rising into celebrity; the inn has been much improved, and the increased resort to Ambleside overflows into this quiet valley. Over and above the animation of a mountain hotel in the height of the season, the starts at day-break for Helvellyn, tappings of the weather-glass, arrangements for breakfast at some impossible hour, and the general bustle and stir of touring among the *residents*, we derive a great deal of additional life from the excursionists. About eleven, the Ambleside coach arrives with its contingent; the materials for a *déjeuner* appear in the coffee-room; strings of vehicles, from the jogging car to the barouche and pair, follow one another into the inn-yard; and up the mountain, down the lake, and over the hotel grounds, flows the tide of sight-seers. Halfway down the lake there is a famous waterfall, the principal attraction for the day-visitors; and many a light-hearted pretty girl, goes laughing and carolling down the lake, and trips up the steps to the fall, making the bright day ten times brighter.

Monday, 3rd Sept.—Almost relieved that there is no post to-day from the south. Skiffed in "the Lucy" to How Town, a secluded little bay about two-thirds down the lake, at the junction of two romantic glens. The wind rose so much in the afternoon that I fastened the good ship "Lucy" to the trunk of a tree in the small port, and walked home, intending to return for her the next day. Going up to bed, overheard the following stage directions: Head-waiter, *loquitur*, instructing the chambermaid. "Here, Rebecca; the gent in No. 6, is to be called at a quarter to eight, and will have a hot bath; and the gent in No. 14, is to be called at a quarter past nine, and will have a shower bath; and he that will have the shower bath, will have a cup of very strong tea in his bedroom first."

Tuesday, 4th Sept.—Stood on the garden terrace, watching the operation of cleaning the potatoes for the day's consumption, in the rear of the hotel; quite an Homeric process, the scene being, not a dingy yard, but the green mountain side, with a bright stream dancing down it, from which the operator, a good-looking, merry country-girl, alternately dipped fresh water and scrubbed the unoffending vegetables with a birch broom, singing like a bird all the time, and bursting out at the stolid-looking hostler, who

came to help her in with the tub, in a round of "chaffing," half-laughter and half-song, which harmonised pleasantly enough with the fresh morning and happy blue sky. Alas! no letter. Went for the "Lucy," and piloted same back in safety. Felt that intense mournfulness which, perhaps, we only can feel when every thing in earth and sky is filled with light and joy, in which one self has no part; like the often quoted solitude of a crowded city.

Wednesday, 5th Sept.—As usual, no news. Depressed and lonely all day, and up to nothing. In the evening, a noisy style of man in the coffee-room, one apparently of some consideration (for he travelled with a courier, and a large leather case, stocked with tea, spirits, and napkins, as if he had been in the interior of Africa), but afflicted with the most harsh and unmelodious of human voices; the result being such as might be produced by a rook talking through its nose, if it had one.

Thursday, 6th Sept.—Still no appearance of a letter. The noisy tourist took a final departure, happily. At eleven, the usual *quantum* of arrivals. Amused with one man, with a young daughter and deaf wife, whose (the wife's) share in social intercourse appeared limited to her being, from time to time, kept informed of intended proceedings in

which she was to bear a part, but without the matter being in any way submitted to her deliberation. So that, having established herself comfortably by the fire, she was first aroused from an apparent delusion as to her stopping there all day, by her lord coming in and shouting in her ear, "Going up Helvellyn." Having recovered from the shock of this intelligence and settled again for a few minutes' repose, she was next roused by a shout of "Going out in the garden." And out accordingly she had to go, as if she was a Bath chair, instead of a being exercising volition. Heard from Palgrave, that he must be off at latest on Monday. In skiffing to-day, came on a sheep which had fallen into the lake from the cliff above; he was swimming stoutly, although away from the land. Put him on shore with some difficulty.

Saturday, 8th Sept.—Walked into Ambleside, to see if by any chance this long-deferred letter might be lying at the Post-office there; could hear no tidings of it. Returned by Grasmere and the Grisedale Pass. A gloomy-looking tarn, swept, as I passed, by a high wind, lies on the top, nestled under the dark crags of Helvellyn: its plash against the shore seemed to echo the desolation of my own heart and life. Four youngsters from Liver-

pool in the coffee-room; gentlemen, but rather lads, I thought, to be trusted out on such a long ramble by themselves. Their talk was of clippers. Mem. —The furniture of the coffee-room comprises the following effects, to wit: 15 chairs; 7 tables; 2 sofas; 2 fire-places, with fenders; an almanack; 5 portraits of eminent bulls, and a brick-red carpet, which at times must be very harrowing to the feelings of those august animals.

Sunday, 9th Sept. — Gloomy and overcast. Young Liverpool down to breakfast about half-past ten. About six p.m. it announced it's intention of going to evening service; but there being no liturgical celebration of the kind at —dale, or probably within 30 miles of it, the young gentlemen solaced themselves with the hotel literature and other refreshments.

Monday, 10th Sept.—Two more days of disappointment. Felt deplorably ill and languid, and at last went in quest of a doctor, a Mr. —, who practices at the bottom of the lake; not, that is, under water, but at — Bridge, where the lake ends. His opinion of my medical state appears to alternate between jaundice and putrid sore throat. Left the "Lucy" at — Bridge, as I did not feel up to pulling back. The latter is a sweet

place; the view up the lake glorious, while a still, silver stream runs out of it under the grey stone bridge, overhung on each side with trees, and with the piers and landing-places of the miniature port lining its banks. Mr. — is quite the "*Médecin de Campagne*;" his establishment a homely cottage, with a sort of kitchen-parlour for the reception of patients, on the fire of which he brewed me, in primitive fashion, while I waited, some decoction for my throat's good; urging, at the same time, other remedies, as to which I finally effected a compromise. While the gargle was brewing, sate speculating how thoroughly one of these country doctors must know the population all round; he brings them all into the world, and helps them all out of it, and does the needful for all their aches and ailments in the meantime. Certainly, I believe the medico *is* right. I have had *very* bad nights lately, either starting up from sleep with visions of the "Lucy" being attacked by natives with long spears, or else pursuing, in a kind of half dream, interminable explanations to some person or persons unknown, to whom I am under the necessity of accounting for my presence in bed at all, as well as for my preferring to lie on the left side instead of the right. It is all the letter, no doubt. I grieved

being ill to-day, for it was one of surpassing loveliness ; the deep blue sky, the tall dusky mountains, the still lake, glassy as crystal. But I am heart-sad, and the shadow of loneliness is on everything.

Tuesday, 11th Sept.—Again, no letter. Throat worse : ill and weary in mind and body. Ordered a boiled neck of mutton for dinner, and commenced the study of the coffee-room almanack. Regretted that my ignorance of astronomy prevented my understanding the practical bearings of the following table in this work of art, *videlicet* :

JULY XXXI.

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | M | an | cles | | ditto | } for the rest of the year. | |
| 2 | Tu | fe | t | | | | |
| 3 | W | a | n | | | | |
| 4 | Th | to | e | | | | |
| 5 | Fr | he | a | ~~~~~ | ditto | | |
| 6 | S | a | n | | | | |
| 7 | S | fa | c | | | | |
| 8 | M | ne | c | | | | |
| 9 | Tu | th | r | | ditto | } | |
| 10 | W | ar | m | ~~~~~ | | | |
| 11 | Th | sh | o | | | | |

At least I conclude that the mysterious intimations in the third column have reference to the proceedings of some heavenly orb or orbs unknown ; although perhaps, after all, their object is more sublunary, and they are intended to point out to

persons who are timid washers, the intervals at which a certain amount of ablution may be applied to the particular parts of the body indicated, without prejudice to the general health. I confess, however, to remaining in darkness upon the subject, as well as in regard to the principle on which the "remarkable occurrences" specified in the *fourth* column have been selected. It may interest mankind to be apprised that the law term commences on one day, or the oyster season on another, but who can be supposed to be concerned in knowing when John Bunyan died, or that Dodd was executed for forgery on the 27th June, 1777? Oh! dear, this is weary work. Just entered the coffee-room two gentlemen, one very lank and lean, who says nothing, and the other very short and stout, who talks for both, in a voice like a bull, as if he were ventriloquising into one of the pictures on the walls. The prevailing current of ideas in his mind appears to be the exploits which his silent friend and himself have performed, notwithstanding the rain, in consequence of their having attired themselves in what he is pleased to call "their little Benjamins." Begin to loathe the very name of this patriarchal garment; but I imagine the worthy couple are departing.

Wednesday, 12th Sept., to Saturday, 15th Sept.—Blank, blank days. What *can* be the cause of Mrs. Witherby's answer not arriving? I tremble to think that it may be some terrible illness or misfortune of dear Lucy's, which the old lady does not know how to break to me. But anything would be better than this terrible suspense. I find Palgrave has started, which is a misfortune, for my fortnight's stay here has shown me that I get little good by being alone. However, here I must remain till I get my letter; I would on no account risk its having to travel after me. Regret now that I brought no books, but I never dreamt of this long detention. Walked over to Keswick on Friday; the children running about the streets in the wooden shoes they wear here sounded like a charge of infantry.

Sunday, 16th Sept.—Better in corporeal health, if I could only shake off this terrible depression at still being without any letters. The morning gloomy, but the afternoon one of great loveliness. It is strange, in grand scenes like these, how the object which really gives you the feeling of pleasure is often quite an ordinary one; some grassy mound in the throat of the pass, with a sheep standing on it in relief against the sky; or a tiny bit of rock,

crowned with the red berries of the mountain ash; or the farm-house children playing with the sheep-dog outside the door, and so busy that they have hardly time for a wondering glance at the stranger (the dark mountains looking down upon them, like the shadows of after life, all the time); or the long line of rails stretching out into the lake, where the villager's boat lies moored, and the cattle come down to drink among the bushes: all things of the merest detail compared with the magnificence that surrounds them, and yet seeming to absorb into themselves for the moment the whole beauty of the picture, like the small kindnesses of daily life, hardly noticeable in words, yet colouring and influencing its course more than its more important acts. Read through that one, one letter of Lucy's, and tried to hope and trust for the best; but it is very hard. The gloom of six months ago seems again settling down upon me. How one's own feelings and interests give a complexion to things and places. I have been thinking several times to-day of Bedfordshire, which, I suppose, is as unpoetical a county as one would infer from its name (I have never seen it), and yet, because Mrs. Witherby lives there, I seem always to associate a character of romance with it, as if it were a kind of

enchanted land, glowing with a sunshine of its own, and leaving the rest of the world in shadow.

Monday, 17th Sept. to Thursday, 20th Sept.— Still no tidings of this strangely protracted letter. Wrote again to Miss Rickards to inquire if she had received an answer to her note. The coffee-room haunted by a wonderfully portly and sententious old gentleman, who has in fact been quite its master spirit since his arrival on Saturday last, knowing apparently the name of every pass and hill in the district, and delivering himself of opinions on their respective merits, as well as things in general, in long-winded elaborate periods, such as one does not commonly hear now-a-days (like Blair's Sermons or the Tatler), with a fluency that is quite portentous. The unfortunate individual upon whom he fastens his orations has the utmost difficulty in escaping, and usually goes to bed with an oppressive sense of nightmare, like Sindbad with the Old Man of the Sea upon his back. I find that parties going from one hotel to another this season have got into the way of receiving and giving warning of him, like travellers in a district infested by some dangerous highwayman. Singular, too, upon what a diet he supports such sustained rhetoric, as well as a frame of so much magnitude; during the five days he has

been here, I have never seen him take anything but tea and soda-water, the latter of which he calls for at periods throughout the evening, lying on the sofa and snoring (when there is no opportunity of holding forth) in the intervals.

Friday, 21st Sept.—Again no letter, and no answer yet from Miss Rickards. Oh! Lucy! how strange, how passing strange it is, to have lived in those short weeks such a life-time of thought and feeling together, and now

End of extracts from journal of Mr. E. Harcourt.

No. IV.

Letter from Mr. E. Harcourt to Mrs. Gresford.

“ ———— date, Friday, 21st Sept.

“ My dear Emily,

“ I leave this place to-day for Oxford, *en route* for London and the Continent. I have kept a journal for you as you wished, and enclose it, such as it is. You will wonder how it comes to break off so abruptly, but the explanation is soon given, alas! I was in the middle of a sentence when a letter was brought into the coffee-room, which proved to be from Miss Rickards, enclosing that which I had

written to Mrs. Witherby. Poor old lady; not only is she the chief of blunderers herself, but mistake and confusion seem associated with her very name. Miss Rickards's friend proves to have been the wrong person! Her absence from home had prevented her receiving Miss Rickards's note, containing my enclosure, until a few days since; the letter she had not opened, as from the expressions in her correspondent's letter she at once perceived there was some mistake. The family she had known in Devonshire a few years since were not the *Akehursts*, but the *Akenhursts*!

"So my weary waiting has been all in vain. I am much vexed too, that I have missed Palgrave's company; it is of course hopeless joining him now; there is in fact only a month left of the vacation. In my own case this is of less consequence, as I have no term to keep, and the examination for my Fellowship is not until the second week in December. I think therefore of packing up my rod and some books, and spending a month or two somewhere in the Black Forest, in Germany; I was reading some descriptions of the scenery there the other day in a quaint old book of travels they have in one of the sitting-rooms upstairs, and fancied I should like to visit it; Philip Bright will go with me. You

have not seen my "reader and amanuensis" yet; he is really very useful to me; and as I have not yet succeeded in finding him any school work, or other employment, I should be afraid of his coming to some mischief (not that he seems at all inclined to it, quite the contrary) if I left him alone in Oxford. Well; that is partly my reason; but I always like to be honest with you, Emily, so I will confess to having another, at the risk of being considered more utterly fanciful and superstitious than you think me even at present. I can hardly tell you how much likeness I see in him, of all persons in the world, to Lucy. It is not a likeness you would observe at first, I think (although I have never in fact seen the two faces together), but one of those resemblances, arising rather from trifling coincidences of look and manner than from any actual identity of features, which grows upon you the more frequently you meet a person. Of course I have never mentioned or implied such a fancy to the youth himself; indeed, he knows nothing of my unhappy attachment; but still, it certainly greatly increases my disposition to take him to the Continent with me for these two or three months. In this utter shipwreck of hope and joy, it seems to me as if I seized eagerly on any

waif which even by an accidental resemblance had the power of recalling my lost treasure.

“Good-bye, Emily dear; I know that I shall have your sympathy in this fresh disappointment; it is only one drop of bitterness added to the cup, but it has pretty nearly made it overflow. I am afraid you will find the “journal” very gloomy; I tried to write cheerfully in it, but Heaven knows it was hard work.

“Ever your affectionate

“EDGAR HARCOURT.”

CHAP. II.

"Lately, as in Sabine shades, thy
Horace roved and sang of thee,
Every meaner care forgotten,
Laughter-loving Lalage!"

HOR. *Od.* i. 22, 9.

IT was on an October forenoon, not more than ten days from the close of the month, but unusually bright and warm for the season, that a young fisherman—(we beg the reader's pardon for such a very conventional exordium to this chapter, but we really do not know how to express ourselves differently)—a young fisherman, whom we may as well acknowledge, without further preface, to be our friend Edgar Harcourt, descended, with a leisurely step, one of the gloomy defiles of the Black Forest. The monotonous character of the valley, hemmed in by pine forests and broken cliffs, with hardly any variety in the outline, and apparently extending interminably in the distance, had a depressing effect on the

eye; and our hero accordingly welcomed with satisfaction the opening of a lateral glen of no great size, which, at the point he had reached, descended rather unexpectedly into the main valley through a dark chasm in its side. The road Harcourt had been hitherto pursuing was little frequented; it was some miles distant from the town of S—burg, where he had taken up his quarters for the time being, and led to no place of importance; it, in fact, served merely as the communication between the scattered habitations of the valley, occasionally comprising a few farm-houses of a rude and primitive character, but more usually consisting only of the squalid huts of the charcoal-burners who were the principal occupants of its upper portion. Harcourt was not alone on the present expedition. The mental suffering he had undergone during the last few months made him less disposed for active exertion than formerly; and he now, on these fishing excursions, frequently hired a rough horse of the country, which he took part of the distance, and then left in Philip's charge (who usually accompanied him for this purpose) until his return, pursuing the rest of his way on foot. This had been the case to-day; on reaching a small farm about a mile lower down the valley than the point where the

lateral glen fell into it, Harcourt dismounted, and desiring his *protégé* to await his return, took his rod and basket, and continued his course leisurely up the stream, throwing a line at intervals, although hitherto without success, and apparently wrapt in melancholy and dejected thought.

The side valley, opposite which Harcourt had now arrived, was accessible by a steep zig-zag road (passable for horses or the rough sledges of the country, but not for any wheeled vehicle) which mounted rapidly through the pine forest on its right side. Not at all sorry to exchange the monotonous prospect before him for one which might offer some variety, Harcourt pursued the bridle path we have mentioned, and, on gaining the higher level to which it led, was repaid by finding himself among scenery of a highly attractive character. The glen he had now entered ran along one of those deep fissures which are of frequent occurrence in limestone strata, and of which examples may be seen even in this country. The stream was here confined and almost jammed in between perpendicular walls of rock, while craggy buttresses and pinnacles of the cliff, fantastically shaped, and clothed with a profusion of creepers, rose above it in every direction, offering a scene, inferior indeed in height to

that presented by the main valley, but far more varied and picturesque. Harcourt had better success with his rod, too, in the small stream of the glen than he had found below: late as the season was, his basket was soon more than half full, and he pursued the sport with more animation than he had felt for some weeks past.

By degrees, however, the interest of this occupation seemed somewhat to flag. The valley, too, as it emerged from the gorge in which it had hitherto been confined, although still possessing some beautiful features, began to lose its highly romantic character; and after more than one unsuccessful experiment with his line, our fisherman again relapsed into his former state of gloomy abstraction. It was now almost noon, and the heat of the glen was oppressive. Harcourt walked wearily onward, frequently seeming as if he were about to stop, but apparently too much wrapped in thought to allow of his doing so. After his last failure with the rod, he had quitted the edge of the stream, and was now pursuing the bridle road we have mentioned, which, rude as it was, formed the only communication between this secluded valley and the external world; his rod and basket were slung on his arm, and his eyes bent down on the ground, although it seemed to be rather

by some mechanical impulse than by their assistance that he avoided the various difficulties which the road from time to time presented. In this way he proceeded for some two or three miles up the glen from the spot where he had left off fishing, apparently without any defined object in pursuing his walk, and unconscious both of the distance and the lapse of time. It was, in fact, one of those intensely bitter moments, recurring capriciously and without any assignable cause, when the young student felt in its full force the desolation of the love in which he had embarked the whole happiness of his life. Without being aware of it, Harcourt had allowed himself to build largely upon the supposed discovery of Mrs. Witherby's address, which, at least, seemed to supply some link of connection between Lucy and himself; and the reaction, when this recently found hope was so strangely dashed to the ground, was great in proportion. His heart was now wrung to the very core; the failure of this last chance seemed to have closed every avenue of success, and made the mysterious barrier which intervened between him and Lucy more impassable than ever. In this mood, his thoughts, with the self-torturing spirit which is characteristic of strong passionate grief, recurred incessantly to the very subject from which

must infallibly derive the greatest pain. Over and over again, did Harcourt review almost every incident of the unspeakably bright weeks he had passed in Lucy's society,—her every look and tone, the scenes they had visited in company, the thoughts they had shared in such happy and unrestrained intercourse. While thus occupied, Harcourt's attention was suddenly recalled to external objects by stumbling with some violence over the knotted root of a tree which lay in his path. The interruption dissipated the train of reflection in which he had been engaged, and looking up, for the first time for some miles, he threw a rapid glance around the objects on each side of him. In an instant his countenance changed from its previous expression of despondency and abstraction to one of surprised interest. Once more before him, the same in almost every attitude and feature, rose the well-remembered vale of the Hirnant! There, in exactly its old place, was the gloomy hollow of the Dall Cwm; there was the Craig-y-Dinas, with its jagged and precipitous sides; in front, the path on which he stood, climbed, as it used to do, steeply up the hill side, and emerged upon the barren moor; on his left was the ravine, terminating in the quarried rock from which he had so nearly fallen on

the night of his first memorable introduction to Plas Newydd!

A second glance served in some degree, to dissipate the illusion, although the singular resemblance which Harcourt had traced in the leading features of the glen to those with which he had been so long familiar was well-founded, and could still, he found, be recalled whenever, after pursuing the analysis of the component parts of the scene, he again allowed his eyes to rest for some time on the ground and then suddenly looked up. It happened, in fact, that the mountains overhanging the valley in which Harcourt now stood were of less height than the rest of the chain, and unusually bare of timber. The fir-trees, which give such a monotonous character to the district, were accordingly absent; and the hills, being covered with grass, and in some places with a stunted brushwood, which at a distance might easily be mistaken for the heather of the Welsh moors, combined with the general similarity of outline and colouring in producing the resemblance by which Harcourt had been so much startled. On the other hand, the *particular* points of difference between the two scenes readily became apparent upon examination; above all, as Harcourt's straining eye speedily discovered, there was no Plas

Newydd. As if to supply its place, however, on a projecting spur of rock immediately above the spot where the house would have stood in the Welsh valley, rose the battlements and mouldering towers of a feudal castle of some size, now apparently in ruins, but highly picturesque, and, as an effective feature in the scene, certainly more than compensating for the absence of the ungainly Welsh structure to which it corresponded in position. In former times, Harcourt would have thrown away rod and basket, and hastened to the examination of an antiquarian relic of so much interest; but, to use his own phrase, he had no heart for any thing of the kind now. Contenting himself with a cursory glance at the exterior, he sat down on a projection of the tree which had so singularly arrested his progress, and, by the process we have already described, endeavoured again and again to bring back vividly to his memory, almost, in fact, to his very sight, the unforgotten features of the vale of the Hirnant. He was surprised, however, to find what a fascination the old castle seemed to have for him, notwithstanding. More than once he placed himself so as to shut it out from his view, as it interfered with the associations he wished to recall; and yet, after every attempt of the kind, he found himself again gazing

at it with an interest for which he was wholly at a loss to account. He now perceived, too, what he had not previously noticed, that the building, or some portion of it, was inhabited; from one or two chimneys in its rear a light wreath of smoke from time to time issued, and, curling gently upwards, disappeared in the blue sky overhead. Harcourt's curiosity was now fairly stimulated. The extreme seclusion of the valley, in which he had not hitherto encountered any human residence, however humble, and the romantic natural features which surrounded it, made him desirous of ascertaining by whom the ruin could be tenanted, and whether any traces of its former history still survived among the present occupants. Leaving his fisherman's apparatus, accordingly, under the tree where he had sat, Harcourt followed a rough path, which diverged from that which he had been pursuing in the direction of the castle, and was soon climbing the rocky height on which the latter was perched. The path ascended in the rear of the building, at first very steeply; afterwards, its inclination became more gradual, and it then wound through a dense copse-wood of some extent, which lay between the precipitous side of the cliff and its level summit. Emerging on the latter, the footway pursued it for a

few hundred yards, and then reached what in former times had been the barbican gate of the castle. Harcourt, however, did not at once proceed to this point. He had followed the path rapidly in its steeper part; on reaching the wood, which was out of sight of the building, he paused for a minute or two to take breath, and stood, admiring the view which here extended for some distance over the winding glen at his feet, and again musing on the singular resemblance presented by the heights at its upper extremity to the Dall Cwm and Craig-y-Dinas of a distant and more familiar region. While he was thus occupied, his attention was aroused by a rustling in the leaves of the underwood close to where he stood. Harcourt turned to ascertain the cause, and, in another instant, with a short, quick bark of delight, a small spaniel of an English breed bounded to his side, jumping up eagerly upon him, and endeavouring to lick his hand with every manifestation of canine attachment. Harcourt's brain almost reeled with astonishment and intense joy. *This time*, at least, there was no illusion; the spaniel was Lucy's! the same which had discovered Harcourt's critical situation at the gates of Plas Newydd on the first evening of his arrival, and which had accompanied Lucy and himself in most of their

excursions afterwards. "Flora, dear Flora," he exclaimed, returning the dog's caresses with unspeakable fondness; "dear Flora, can you not speak, and tell me all?"

It almost seemed as if the dog could: barking and yelping, bounding forward one moment, and then the next darting back to Harcourt to see whether he was following, it appeared as if, with the wonderful instinct often observed in the inferior animals, it was indeed doing its best to lead him towards the castle gate. Harcourt obeyed the summons; and, after a heart-breathed supplication that the anticipations awakened by this unexpected discovery might not again result in disappointment, he pursued his way towards the entrance of the dismantled fortress.

CHAP. III.

"I saw, where from the yelping dogs two savage beasts of prey
Had snatched a young kid in their jaws, and slunk in haste away:
Through brier and thro' brake they went, and high above the ground
Still bore their trembling prize along, 'mid forest shades profound."

HOMER, *Il.* 13. 198.

As we readily admitted that our friend Harcourt was the fisherman whose proceedings we described in our last chapter, so we are bound to be equally frank in stating that the individual who is now seated writing in the deep bay-window of one of the two available sitting rooms of the old castle, is Mr. Butler. At the same time, as his appearance there may be considered to require explanation, the reader will probably pardon us for presenting him with a brief summary of the mode in which that gentleman had disposed of the thirteen months, or thereabouts, which have elapsed since we were last in his society.

During the period of Lucy's recovery from her

illness at Baden-Baden, Mr. Butler had ample time to arrange his future course of proceeding. While he experienced naturally some disappointment at the intimation given by the English physician, that Lucy's mind was still unaffected, and that the occurrence which had taken place was solely the result of the delirium of fever, Butler yet was far from despairing of success. On the contrary, Dr. ——'s words had distinctly pointed to the likelihood of more serious results, in the event of his patient being again exposed to excitement; and with this view, as we have stated in a previous chapter, he had recommended the strictest quiet and seclusion. This answered Butler's purpose well enough. On leaving Baden-Baden it had (ever since Lucy's state had assumed the critical form we have described) been his intention to find some place out of the common beat of tourists and visitors, where he might prosecute his schemes undisturbed; and the physician's opinion afforded him, in the event of any subsequent inquiry, the best possible justification for having done so. Such a locality was not long in offering. By an advertisement in *Galignani*, which was regularly forwarded to him, Butler ascertained that Schloss Herzenfeldt, "an ancient castellated mansion," the advertisement stated, "in a retired and highly

picturesque part of the Black Forest, had recently been restored, so as to render it suitable for a family residence, and was now to let," (the proprietor being apparently, a person of a most obliging disposition,) "for any period, long or short, and really at a rent entirely nominal." Upon reference to the agent at Paris, Butler found that the Schloss, although in a ruinous and dilapidated state, would still, from the partial repairs it had undergone, furnish sufficient accommodation for his present purpose. He had also, by subsequent inquiries through the agent, as well as in other quarters, the satisfaction of learning that its position was of the most secluded character, the nearest town being that of S——burg adverted to in our last chapter. This place was itself nearly ten miles distant from the castle, and was more properly a walled village than a town; of some pretensions, indeed, in earlier times, but now in a decaying state, and far removed from the leading thoroughfares either of business or curiosity, although occasionally, as in Harcourt's case, the casual research of an antiquarian or lover of scenery penetrated to this otherwise unvisited locality. In addition to this, the whole district which surrounded S——burg, was of a primitive and semi-barbarous character, traversed by few roads, and overspread by sombre

very great, and on both accounts Butler was glad to adopt a different mode of procedure. But besides this, a more accurate consideration of the case showed him that his recurrence to a secluded life such as the family had led at Plas Newydd, but with increased facilities for carrying out the nefarious plan he had conceived, would probably offer him the best chance of success. Dr. —, as Butler reflected, had, of course, only been superficially acquainted with the circumstances of Lucy's illness; when he spoke of excitement being undesirable, he probably thought of her having mixed, like the ordinary run of visitors, in the gaiety and dissipation of Baden-Baden; he could not in any way divine the real isolation she had experienced there, still less the terrible secret which had so long preyed upon her, and to which the attack was really attributable. Putting himself, therefore, in Lucy's place, Butler rightly judged that he could not rely upon the hurry and whirl of society again producing even the same effects it had already done, much less any more serious results; the blow had been struck, and had served his purpose well, but something further would probably now be requisite. Had Lucy's illness arisen from excitement, a repetition of the same cause would, doubtless, have led to its recurrence; but

as its nature was more deep-seated, the accident which had developed it might fail of doing so a second time; some different, and perhaps more powerful, agent must now be resorted to. And this Butler believed he had found.

Notwithstanding Lucy's uniform gentleness of manner and speech towards all who approached her, even in the period of her deepest trouble, it had not escaped Butler's observation that she was suffering from a cause to which we have adverted in a previous chapter; a nervous irritability of temper, of which, although she never allowed its outward expression to appear, it was impossible wholly to eradicate the traces. Instead of the sweet smile and kindly answer with which the poor girl now, as ever, welcomed all who approached her, rising spontaneously to her lips, they now evidently required an effort; often, if she had consulted her own inclination, she would have preserved a sullen and morose silence, or even allowed herself a petulant reply. It was one of those trials of character which subjects the heart, as it were, to a furnace-test, eliciting from the rough ore of natural temperament and amiability the pure metal of durable and confirmed habit. Hard as the trial was, Lucy bore it uncomplainingly; above all, she struggled, as we have said, that no outward in-

dication should appear of the intense irritability, the result of the gloom and anxiety which had so suddenly overcast her young life, from which she at times suffered inexpressibly within; but it *was* a struggle; and it was one that could not fail to attract an eye so penetrating and keen as Butler's. He saw in this a fresh agent to subdue the wrung heart, and enfeebled, though as yet undisturbed, brain: he resolved to intensify it, to bring it to a pitch, in which, suppressed and smothered within, as he knew it would be by Lucy's noble nature, it would react with fatal violence upon the whole system; he selected his implements and machinery; he prepared to work upon it in imprisonment, in darkness, in *chains*. Of course, the step was a little bolder than he had yet ventured upon; it was, he well knew, illegal, even on the justification which he would now be able to allege for it, of Lucy's nocturnal flight, and his not unnatural apprehension of a similar occurrence. Still, less attention was paid to such matters at the period of which we write; in fact, up to within a year or two even of the present time (when perhaps the error lies rather the other way), instances have come to light, of alleged lunatics, immured in their own homes in hopeless captivity for periods of twenty, thirty, forty years, sometimes for

a whole lifetime ; with the best possible intentions on the part of those who had assumed the charge of them, and without the slightest remonstrance from any quarter, although, of course, in direct violation of the law. Again, supposing even that Lucy's mind survived this first shock, Butler had little doubt that her health would be undermined by the process. At any rate, the plan appeared the most feasible of all that now offered ; and with much confidence in his own acuteness and fertility of resources, as well as in the good fortune which seemed, hitherto, to have favoured all his schemes, he prepared for his two years' occupation of the desolate fortalice of Schloss Herzenfeldt, trusting to emerge from its recesses, even before the expiration of that period, as the lawful owner and proprietor of Cheveleigh with its splendid rental ; and with no more scruple as to the character of the means by which he was hoping to effect this result than a schoolboy would feel in twisting the neck of a hedge sparrow. " She's a nice little girl enough," said Butler, repeating his own sentiments on a former occasion ; " but, of course, as she's in the way, it can't be helped." And with this aphorism, the worthy attorney finished the bottle of Sauterne, in which he had been indulging at the time the present phase in his projects dawned upon

his indefatigable brain, and quitting the *salle-à-manger*, was soon occupied with the preliminaries necessary for carrying his plans into actual execution.

The arrangements which most pressed upon Butler's attention with the above view, regarded first the choice of the servants necessary to compose the intended establishment at the Schloss; and secondly the mode of reaching the latter place with a secrecy which should interpose a fair proportion of impediments in the way of any one who might attempt to trace his route from Baden-Baden, while at the same time, in the case of any subsequent inquiry, the course adopted should appear to have been the result of accident rather than premeditated design. He was eminently successful in both these matters of detail.

The most important personage in the projected *ménage* was a nurse for Lucy. Much to Butler's satisfaction, he found the precise person he wanted in an old woman whom he had encountered in one of his rambles at Baden-Baden a few weeks previously. This indispensable attendant, a wizened, peevish, old crone, with bleared eyes and hideous aspect, a mixture of stolidity and petty cunning, such as one often observes in the Swiss *crétins*, first

crossed Butler's path on the morning when Lucy had been found under the bridge, in the paroxysm of her brain fever. Butler took note of her, as he did of every face he met which presented any unusual variety, either in expression or feature, of the human species; not, indeed, at the time discovering any definite use to which he could turn his observations, but storing them up, nevertheless, to be produced on any emergency that might occur. When, a few weeks later, he decided on removing to the Schloss, the old woman at once presented herself to his thoughts. He had no idea of her name or residence, or how far she might be disposed to enter his service in the capacity he wished; still the chance was worth trying. Prosecuting his inquiries, he soon ascertained that the object of his quest, one Ulrike Pfeiffer, lived a short distance out of the town, in a solitary cottage on the country road which Lucy had followed on the night of her unhappy flight. Ulrike bore an indifferent reputation in the neighbourhood, where she was, in fact, suspected of being more or less a witch; she was, however (although, as Butler found, stone-deaf), accustomed to preside at what are popularly known to spinster ladies as "maternal occasions" among the poorer cottagers in the vicinity, and was considered to dis-

play both skill and knowledge in such transactions. The good lady's deafness at once decided Butler on enlisting her services, if possible. He stated to Ulrike, through the medium of an interpreter who was accustomed to converse with her on his fingers, that he wished to engage her for two years as the attendant on an invalid young lady; she would be well paid and well fed, and treated in all respects like an English servant; a condition of life to which foreigners, as they well may, look up as offering the maximum of happiness, as far at any rate as personal comforts go, which is to be enjoyed anywhere upon this planet. Ulrike consented with very little hesitation. Butler did not give her his name at the time, but promised that he would see her before his departure which would probably take place in a few days, and arrange for her accompanying her charge in the travelling carriage.

With the remaining domestics Butler had more difficulty, but eventually he succeeded in procuring persons of the description required. Besides the nurse, he found that three servants would be necessary for the occupation of the Schloss; a man, as a kind of out-door helper about the house and premises, and two female servants in-doors; all these he decided on engaging in England. By the inter-

vention of a judicious friend at home, who stood in the same confidential relation to Butler in the prosecution of any general schemes of a delicate nature which Dr. Isaacs did in those of a pecuniary character, Butler was fortunate enough to hire the class of servants he wished in all the above capacities. He had taken the precaution of engaging the persons he required from different parts of England. His out-door factotum was an honest but intensely stupid Northumbrian; the cook was from Wales; while the other female servant, a raw cherry-cheeked damsel who officiated as housemaid and attendant on the family, was a native of Gloucestershire. The rendezvous of these various functionaries had been fixed by Butler at Paris, from which he had arranged for their safe conveyance to the town in the neighbourhood of the Schloss.

Butler's own movements necessitated a more elaborate preparation. The difficulty of passports had been already overcome; but in addition to this he was anxious, as we have said, to effect his migration to the Schloss in a mode which should furnish no clue to the place of his retreat, while at the same time, in the event of any inquiry which might be brought to bear upon the transactions of the present period, it should wear the air of accident rather than

of studied concealment. After some deliberation, his ready wit suggested a course of proceeding which he eventually carried into effect as follows. His first step was to engage for a particular day in the following week, by which time Lucy would probably be sufficiently strong to admit of her travelling, the coupé of the eilwagen to Heidelberg, together with a seat in the banquette for Ulrike; paying the whole of the four fares in advance. Having despatched this part of the business, Butler on the same day drove out with his wife and Lucy to a small but pleasant village, about three miles from Baden-Baden, containing a spa of considerable native resort, although little frequented by strangers. Butler drove here, without luggage, in one of the common hired carriages which ply about Baden-Baden at all hours. On reaching the village, he dismissed the vehicle, and placing Lucy, who was now able to walk a short distance and seemed refreshed by the open air, between himself and Mrs. Butler, with an appearance of assiduous care and precaution, he seated himself with his companions on a bench in a kind of public promenade which formed the principal attraction of the place. While seated here, a new idea seemed to strike Butler. He had already been profuse in his admiration of the beauty of the spot;

he now appeared to notice for the first time that in a house immediately fronting them there were furnished apartments at present vacant. Conducting Lucy to the house in the same guarded manner (for Butler's cue, since her convalescence was confirmed, had been to treat her, not indeed ungently, but with an air of suspicious and apprehensive watchfulness), he made some inquiry as to the apartments, which he finally engaged, adding aloud that he thought this would be far preferable to their remaining in the town for the week which would still elapse before their departure. He then arranged for Lucy's immediate removal to her own room, in which he desired that the servant of the house might continue with her until his return, it being necessary for himself, he said, to return to Baden-Baden and bring out the luggage. Half-a-dozen words (for Butler had contrived to learn a good deal of the language), coupled with a significant gesture, sufficed to explain to the landlady the reasons of the request; and the latter, in consideration of the handsome *douceur* promised by Butler, readily undertook that either herself or her servant should, as well during his present absence as during the rest of their stay there, act the part of keeper to the young lady. As they purposed travelling, Butler said he did not

at present intend to impose the personal restraints which his daughter's state unhappily rendered necessary, and to which he should be compelled ultimately to resort: for the present he hoped to supply their place by the most unremitting vigilance. As to Lucy herself, her enfeebled state, as well as the terror which she associated with her confused recollections of her late illness (the first step, as she supposed, in the doom which had been so long impending), prevented her contesting any arrangement which her step-father might think fit to adopt.

Lucy being thus disposed of, Butler returned with his wife to the town to arrange the removal of their luggage; the latter Butler had taken care from the first should be easily transported, and the rough kind of car which had brought them in from the village sufficed for its conveyance there. No clue as to their destination was left, either at the Baden house or at the Post-office. Dr. —'s visits had ceased some few days previously, in consequence of a hint from Butler to that effect; which it must be confessed, as we are all human, had a considerable effect in diminishing the physician's interest in his patient, as well as the probability of his troubling himself with any further inquiries about her; in fact, Lucy was now sufficiently free

from actual illness to admit of her dispensing with his attendance.

On the day fixed for their departure to Heidelberg, Butler called at an early hour at the office of the eilwagen, to say that, as one of the party was an invalid, and the vehicle did not start until the afternoon, he should probably, to save fatigue, proceed by some other conveyance to a small town which he named, a few stages from Baden-Baden, and there await the arrival of the eilwagen ; at the same time, he brought out Ulrike with him to the village in which the family were at present residing. Two or three hours later, an inferior kind of coach, called, we believe, a *stell-wagen*, passed through the latter place, avoiding Baden-Baden, and pursuing, as Butler had previously ascertained, a cross-road to the town at which he had proposed to join the coach in which he had taken places. There happened to be room in this, and, with some apparent demur at employing such a conveyance, Butler took his departure. As he had foreseen, long before reaching the main route to Heidelberg, Lucy's strength proved unequal to continue the journey ; the cross-road traversed by the *stell-wagen* was of the most execrable character, and the jolting of the humble vehicle itself completed the exhaustion of the

invalid. Accordingly, at the first place which offered tolerable accommodation, the party dismounted, and took up their quarters there for the night; Butler expressing repeatedly, in the hearing of the good people of the inn, his annoyance at having thus forfeited the expensive fares by the eilwagen, while, at the same time, he inquired of the host where a voiture could be procured, intimating that he should now probably give up his intention of proceeding to Heidelberg, and at once settle down in some quiet locality. The landlord was able to supply the conveyance required, and, on the next day, Lucy being sufficiently recruited by a night's sleep, Butler crossed into one of the main *southward* routes, which lay at no great distance, and then, travelling by a somewhat circuitous course, although with the greatest despatch, and frequently joining public conveyances on the line of road, so as to break the chain of communication, ultimately reached the town in the vicinity of Schloss Herzfeldt, which we have already mentioned. The conducteur of the Heidelberg eilwagen, not meeting with his promised passengers along the road, had supplied their place with some profit to himself; and, in the course of a few days, the circumstance faded from his memory as entirely as if it had never

occurred; the names of Mr. Butler and his family continuing, with the statement of the full fare being paid, upon the books of the office as passengers to Heidelberg, and not a trace remaining to any inquirer at Baden-Baden to show the route they had actually adopted; while, in the event of the latter being in fact discovered, every circumstance in Butler's proceedings was so entirely natural that it could not possibly form any just ground of suspicion.

We must conclude what we fear the reader may consider the somewhat troublesome detail of this chapter by a brief sketch of the interior arrangements of the castle, at the gate of which we have rather unceremoniously kept Harcourt waiting. Butler's first care had been to provide for Lucy's accommodation. On the journey he had well digested his plans, as to the precise mode of treatment he meant to pursue towards her. Acting on the cue we have already described, he was careful to let it be seen, while treating her with all possible kindness, that he considered her case one of extreme anxiety, and requiring strict surveillance and control. He watched her incessantly, rarely leaving the room, and appearing to apprehend in every movement and act of the frail, helpless being who lay

before him, some fresh outbreak of dangerous violence. To the domestics at the Schloss, who arrived there nearly at the same time with himself, Butler was still more explicit. "He hoped," he said, "they would have the good sense not to be frightened at being in the house with an insane person. Miss Akehurst's derangement was, unhappily, quite confirmed; at Baden-Baden she had escaped from the house during the night, of course at the risk of her life, and had been found the next morning sitting undressed near a road, at some distance from the town. It would be necessary, therefore, to place her under restraint, and this was the reason of Mr. Butler and her mother having come to settle in this retired place; but there would be nothing whatever to occasion alarm to the household generally. Ulrike would do everything for the young lady, who would be kept entirely in one room; "in fact, it would be necessary," Butler regretted to say, "to confine her hands, and perhaps impose some other bodily restraint, as, after what had occurred, there was always the danger of a further attack equally unexpected with the last, during which she might, if at liberty, inflict upon herself some fatal injury." This statement, which Butler delivered with much form to the assembled household, he

repeated afterwards to the out-door servant, Jelps, whom, as the person most likely to influence the current of public opinion in the servants' hall, Butler was always particular to treat with a kind of frank *bonhomie* and good temper. Apparently, however, he ran no risk in this quarter. The lower classes among the English have almost a superstitious dread of insanity in any form; and, what with the novelty of their situation, the wildness and seclusion of the adjoining district, and the dilapidated aspect of the old castle itself, the three domestics of the Schloss, huddling together over their wood fire, were quite as much disposed as Butler could have desired to accept implicitly his statement as to Lucy's unhappy state, and, in fact, only too thankful to leave "the poor young lady" in Ulrike's whole and sole charge. Indeed, so much did her presence in the building add to the horrors, real and imaginary, with which it was already invested in the minds of these worthies, that it was only the liberal wages paid by Butler, coupled with the difficulty, at this distance from home, of finding any other alternative, which induced them to continue in their present situation.

Butler accordingly was enabled to carry out, without exciting either comment or suspicion, the plan of

rigorous confinement on which he had now determined, and the interior arrangements of the Schloss (to which we must venture to request our readers' most careful attention) offered him the utmost facilities for doing so. The apartments which had been fitted up for family use lay exclusively in one wing of the ruin, consisting, as we have already intimated, of two sitting apartments, with three or four bedrooms of fair size and comfort immediately adjoining; the whole of these were on the first or upper story, the ground floor underneath being unoccupied. From the landing of the staircase, which gave access to these, a passage of fair dimensions led off to the sleeping-rooms of the domestics. These, like the apartments occupied by the family, were on the first or upper story, although on a somewhat higher level; the ground floor beneath these was, however, occupied, containing the kitchen and other necessary offices. The passage leading to the servants' rooms had originally extended further, conducting to various chambers on the same upper (or *first*) story, in that which was now the ruinous part of the castle; it had, however, been long since bricked up, although some rooms on the *second* floor of the ruinous part were still accessible, not of course from the passage itself, but by passing through the last room

in the suite of servants' apartments, which had been appropriated to the Northumbrian Jelps. At the end of his room was a door opening on to a winding staircase, with no lower outlet. Ascending this, and traversing a corridor of some length, the visitor found himself in an octagonal tower adjoining the wing, if we may so call it, corresponding to that in which the inhabited apartments were situated. The tower was of no great size, and the rooms in it, to which the corridor gave access, were only two in number, the one opening inside the other; they were still in tolerable repair, having formerly, it would seem, been used as some kind of granary or loft. Above them, there was nothing but the lead roof of the turret, which was still entire; below, the corridor had formerly communicated with a turnpike or winding stair similar to that by which it had been approached, and leading down past the *first* or lower story to the foot of the tower, and thence out into the centre court of the castle; but the steps of this were now ruinous and wholly impassable. With the exception of the tenantable portions we have described (and of which we trust our readers have been able to collect a tolerable idea, their position being intimately connected with the future occurrences of our story), the castle offered

nothing but a series of dilapidated and crumbling ruins, with sunken floors and gaping crevices in the walls, wholly unsafe for human habitation, and reminding the traveller, as his step echoed along the gloomy corridors, or paused before some yawning abyss in the disrupted floors, of the instability of human greatness, and the power which the insidious attacks of time and decay exert, even upon structures which have been reared with all the appliances of art and luxury.

It will be as obvious to the reader as it was to Butler on his first inspection, that the two rooms in the octagonal tower offered precisely the place which he could have wished for Lucy's occupation; and he lost no time in having them arranged for that purpose. Although wholly unfurnished on his arrival, he speedily contrived to make them habitable, by the removal of a truckle bed from one of the servant's apartments into the outermost of the two chambers, while a bedstead of more pretensions was got ready for Lucy's occupation in the room within. A few other necessary articles of domestic use completed the preparations in this part of the castle, the projected arrangements meeting with no opposition in any quarter. A feeble remonstrance, indeed, appeared to have been contemplated by the three

English servants, on the ground of the lunatic occupying apartments so contiguous to their own; and Mr. Jelps, after some amount of priming, was put forward in the capacity of spokesman. The case, however, when it came to be divested of the accessories with which it had been invested in the servants' hall, shrunk into such very insignificant dimensions, that even the accredited organ of the party seemed a little ashamed of it; and being further reassured by Mr. Butler's distinct promise, that not only should Lucy be subjected to the personal restraint already mentioned, and Ulrike's room always kept locked, but also that the door leading from Jelps's own apartment on to the winding staircase and the corridor (which, the reader will observe, formed *the only access* to Lucy's place of confinement) should be similarly treated, and the key hung over the fireplace in the kitchen down-stairs all day, and at night placed under Mr. Jelps's own pillow, that gentleman ultimately acquiesced in the plan, and promised to procure for it the adhesion of his fellow-servants, as one which, in fact, held out to them the greatest prospect of unity from the mysterious terrors connected with the presence of insanity under their own roof.

In point of fact, the precautions which were thus forced upon him by the timidity of the servants were

perfectly in accordance with the tenor of Butler's own schemes in regard to Lucy. He could not but feel that a crisis was now approaching; that in the course of a few months at least, the atrocious project he had conceived must bear its evil fruit, shattering and breaking down, if all ensued as he had planned it, the bereaved heart and feeble frame which were now opposed to it; and he was most anxious, under these circumstances, that anything like the suspicion of "foul play" should be, by the very facts of the case, wholly excluded in the event of any inquiry that might ensue. He was aware, indeed, as we have already intimated, that in his present proceedings he was somewhat overstepping the strict letter of the law; but there was abundant precedent, in more than one family, even with those with whom he had himself been brought in contact, for such a proceeding; the circumstances of Lucy's illness at Baden-Baden were of a character quite sufficient to afford a moral vindication, at any rate, especially in the case of a parent, for the degree of restraint he now contemplated; and he entertained little doubt that some return of the complaint, or even some outbreak of a more serious character, would soon be induced in the irritated temperament and enfeebled frame which would amply justify the measures adopted. But

this feeling of security made Butler, as we have said, all the more anxious to have every thing *externally* arranged so as to obviate even the supposition of any thing like violence. Accordingly, nothing could be more satisfactory to him than the precaution which made Jelps' room the sole access to his step-daughter's place of confinement, and at the same time precluded himself from approaching the latter without the full cognizance of the whole household; and no one saw with more complacency than Mr. Butler the huge key which protected his factotum from the terrors of the winding staircase and corridor, duly installed in its place by Mr. Jelps every morning, and as duly reinstated there whenever Ulrike, (who, not less by her own inclination, than Butler's command, rarely quitted the outermost of the two rooms in which Lucy was confined), had received from the hands of the scared Gloucestershire damsel who waited upon her the modicum of food and kirsche-wasser which enabled her to support the duties of that arduous vigil.

And thus Lucy, on the evening of her arrival at Schloss Herzenfeldt, faint and weary with the long, rapid journey, conscious of a dark terror in the past, and a still unfulfilled doom in the future, laid down her head meekly on the bed of her captivity, and

bore without a murmur the gyve and the manacle, the perpetual witness of her isolation from the common hopes and sympathies of human kind. And thus they sped on, the days, the weeks, the months, of that dark solitary prison-house. But not without the chance and change that happen unto all alike.

CHAP. IV.

"Thy wiles were not forgotten then,
Ulysses, craftiest of men."

HOM. *Il.* 23. 725.

NEVER were Mr. Butler's energies of mind and character more severely tasked than when, on the morning on which we presented him to our readers at the commencement of the last chapter, the rosy-cheeked Gloucestershire servant, (whose delight at once more hearing the English language spoken by some one external to the circle at the Schloss, and beholding within its walls such a personable specimen of that race as our friend Harcourt, was most unbounded, and who naturally concluded that her employer's sensations must be of the same order), opened the door of the room in which Butler was seated, very wide, and, with a broad grin of satisfaction, ushered in the visitor with the words, "If you please, zur, here be Muster Hurkut cum to zee

you." Admirable as Butler's self-possession and ready wit undoubtedly were, he found them barely adequate to the occasion. Had the time allowed, he would of course have declined to see the visitor, but Harcourt had followed the servant close up stairs, and was in the room almost as soon as his name was mentioned. With an astonishing effort of self-command, Butler recovered himself from the surprise and dismay which had seized him on first hearing the girl's announcement; his next object was to endeavour to gain time. Slightly rising from the table, he bowed to Harcourt, not discourteously, but at the same time without appearing to recognise the name; at the same time motioning to a chair, he requested him to be seated. Harcourt had no awkwardness of manner, and under ordinary circumstances would at once have entered into conversation; as it was, however, he certainly did feel his position one of some embarrassment, and a pause ensued, which Butler was the first to break; he spoke in a tone apparently of entire ease, although a *very* close observer, acquainted with the circumstances, might have detected in it an occasional tremulousness.

"Mr. Harcourt, I think my servant announced; I am afraid I do not recollect the name."

This greeting did not at all diminish the visitor's embarrassment. The only possible way in which he could describe himself, so as to assist Mr. Butler's treacherous memory, was as Miss Akehurst's lover; and there was such manifest difficulty, and, in fact, to Harcourt's keen sense of the ridiculous, perhaps all the more highly strung from the intense anxiety of the present moment, such a mixture of the absurd in his adopting this designation, that he fairly lost his self-possession; and between blushing, fidgetting on his chair, and attempting one or two ineffectual commencements of sentences, looked more entirely "the young man" than any one who had known Edgar Harcourt, Esq., before or afterwards, would have considered possible. Butler instantly saw his advantage.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Harcourt," he said, "I am *very* much occupied just at present" (and Butler slightly glanced towards the table at which he was writing). "I am afraid your name and person are both wholly unknown to me; but perhaps you will kindly state in what I can be of service to you. You are English, I presume?"

With extreme difficulty, Harcourt at length succeeded in faltering out some allusion to Lucy: "correspondence;" "Plas Newydd;" "Miss Ake-

hurst," were the only words audible to his companion. Butler appeared suddenly to recall the circumstances.

"Oh! yes, to be sure," he said, "of course I remember it perfectly. You will excuse my not having done so at once, Mr. Harcourt, but a good deal has happened since the occurrences you refer to, and your name really sounded entirely strange to me. You will still pardon me for asking," Butler continued after a pause, "to what I am indebted for the favour of this visit?"

Harcourt again found the answer extremely difficult; he had, in fact, framed to himself no definite plan at all in the short interval, one of extreme excitement and agitation, which had elapsed between his recognition of Lucy's spaniel and his admission into the castle. He stated, however, in a few sentences, scarcely less incoherent than before, the accident by which he had discovered who the present inmates of the castle were, and added that he could not resist the impulse of seeing Mr. Butler and inquiring after Miss Akehurst's health.

Butler was inexpressibly relieved by this announcement; it at once dissipated the apprehensions he had previously felt, that Harcourt's visit might be part of some preconceived plan, possibly the result of

investigation and inquiries among parties at home. He at once gave credit to the young man's statement as to its purely accidental character, and framed his answer accordingly, at the same time bestowing a mental anathema of more than usual intensity both upon his visitor and on the unconscious Flora, to whom he was indebted for the latter's ill-timed appearance. He resumed, in a less distant manner than before, but at the same time with some degree of grave reproof in his tone, such as a senior may employ at times without offence.

"Mr. Harcourt," he said, "I will be very candid with you. I do not think this ought to have occurred. It is hardly honourable; hardly, if you will excuse my saying so, what one gentleman has a right to expect from another, especially under the peculiar circumstances of the case. Of course, I can make every allowance for the feelings of a young man, and the accident which brought you here was undoubtedly, as you say, very singular. Still you must recollect, my dear sir, that at your time of life, you can no longer act upon mere impulse, like a boy. We have all of us duties which we owe to society and each other; and I cannot but feel (especially, as I have said, under the painful circumstances of the case) that your present in-

trusion has been very wrong, very unwarrantable. Even had things been different, you cannot but recollect the very explicit manner in which both Miss Akehurst and her mother declined to sanction your further addresses."

There was something in Butler's words and manner which sent a thrill of vague terror through his listener's heart: he stammered out some kind of apology, however, and then continued silent. Butler again spoke.

"My dear sir, I do not wish to seem discourteous: under other circumstances I need not say how glad I should have been to have offered a fellow-countryman such hospitality as this out-of-the-way place can afford; but as it is, I fear I *must* ask you to leave us at once. I am myself, as I have already mentioned, very busy to-day; but, besides this, I am really in constant apprehension of seeing Mrs. Butler enter the room, in which case your name and presence would at once revive the most distressing associations. You can have no conception of the state of mind into which my wife has been thrown by the events of the last year."

Deadly pale, quivering from head to foot, Harcourt could only gasp a few sentences in reply. "Mr. Butler, for God's mercy, speak; tell me the

worst; *what* has happened? Is she—— has any thing——” Harcourt could not finish the sentence which rose to his lips.

“Have you not heard, then?” Butler answered. “I am almost glad of it; as it makes your visit here more pardonable. My unfortunate daughter” (Butler spoke with unusual huskiness, and succeeded in eliciting a species of dew from his eyes, which he immediately afterwards, during the slight pause which followed these words, produced in an unquestionable form upon his knuckles, as if to satisfy himself and his visitor by personal inspection of its authenticity), “my daughter, Mr. Harcourt, is . . . is that which I fear to name; she is bereft of reason; *mad*. At Baden-Baden, where we were staying, it broke out with great violence, and quite unexpectedly; she escaped from the house at night, fled through the town in her undress” (Butler began speaking rather hurriedly here, at the same time listening at intervals, as if he heard footsteps approaching); “next morning she was found, raving mad, under the arch of a bridge some way out in the country. Her mother had always feared it from her infancy; there were certain indications; she never disclosed them to any one, and her own mind has really suffered in consequence. The child,

I believe, had had a fall, and her mother always had a morbid feeling that she was herself the cause of it: it has preyed upon her night and —— But” (in a whisper) “here really is Mrs. Butler, as I feared; do leave the room, Mr. Harcourt; quick, I entreat you; thank you, thank you, sir; this way; good morning, Mr. Harcourt, good morning; would that we could have met under more auspicious circumstances. But we must all try and bear this heavy blow.” And with these valedictory morsels of consolation, Butler, who had meanwhile hurried his stupified and unresisting visitor, whom he held by the arm, down the main staircase and out to the entrance-gate of the castle, now himself opened the massive oak wicket for him, and closing it again after a friendly squeeze of the hand, left our hero to pursue his own ruminations on the outside.

CHAP. V.

“Through the sounding depths of ocean,
Man’s prophet soul hath sped ;
He hath tracked the tempest’s motion,
And the lightning’s shaft of dread ;
He hath mapped earth’s granite chambers,
And the curtained heavens above ;—
Love only is unsearchable ;
He cannot mete out love.”

R. LARGE.

AFTER Harcourt’s somewhat uncereemonious expulsion from the Schloss in the manner we have described in the last chapter, Butler first satisfied himself, by personal inspection from one of the ruinous turrets in the building which looked that way, that Harcourt (as was the case) had quitted the barbican gate, and was wending his way, slowly and dejectedly but apparently without any intention of returning, to the small wood on the brow of the hill, through which as we have already said the footpath to the castle ran ; he then himself returned, wrapt in gloomy and abstracted thought, to the sitting-room

he had just quitted. It is needless to say that the intimations which Butler alleged himself to have heard of his wife's approach to that room, were a pure fiction; while the important business with which he professed to have been occupied on Harcourt's entrance, if not so entirely apocryphal, was at least of a character which did not preclude Mr. Butler's attention being diverted to other subjects. On the contrary, on entering the apartment, instead of returning to the writing-table he at once proceeded to the fireplace, and there taking up a position which the reader is aware was rather a favourite one with him, his elbow resting on the mantelpiece, and one cheek pressed firmly against the open palm of his hand, he continued for nearly an hour in profound reflection.

In fact, independently of Harcourt's unexpected appearance which had brought matters to a crisis, there were several points which at the present time pressed themselves on the attorney's anxious consideration. To explain this state of things to the reader we must again briefly recapitulate.

Up to the time of Butler's occupation of the castle, the atrocious plan which he had conceived for possessing himself of the wealth and fair domain of Cheveleigh had been attended with a success which

exceeded his most sanguine hopes. Every thing had fallen out as nearly as possible as he had hoped; not a single drawback had happened, not the shadow of suspicion or inquiry crossed his path: in many instances, combinations of circumstances had occurred, as exactly calculated to further the development of his plans, as if he had taken fortune herself into his confidence and bribed her with a promise of a share of the spoils. Nor did this favourable aspect of affairs cease during the first two or three months of Butler's residence at Schloss Herzenfeldt. His success, indeed, was not so marked or rapid as it had hitherto been; but this could hardly have been expected. The enterprise, in its present stage especially, of necessity required time; and perhaps on the whole, things might have been said to be going on as favourably for Butler's projects as he could have desired.

There was one circumstance in particular which at first fully justified the calculations which this consummate observer of character had based upon it; this was, the increased mental and bodily suffering entailed upon Lucy by the suppressed irritability of which we have already spoken, and which, Butler judged, would be augmented tenfold by the close and rigorous confinement in which she was now

placed. The event showed that he was not mistaken. Still, as before, not a murmur or complaint escaped the lips of the poor girl as she lay, day by day, confined hand and foot, on her meagre bed, seeing no one but Butler, or the hideous features of old Ulrike; wholly without resources except her own thoughts, and hardly noting the lapse of time, or the alternations of light and darkness. Once or twice, when for some accidental reason the thongs by which she was restrained had been removed for a few moments under Butler's superintendence, and were about to be replaced, she had looked up at the latter with a sweet smile, and simply asked, "Is it necessary?" But with these exceptions, if such they may be called, Lucy appeared never to question the reasons of her hard lot. The past, as she knew from a vague consciousness which she retained of the occurrences at Baden-Baden, was a cause of terror and dismay to all who were acquainted with it; the future, if unrestrained, might be still worse; and, although at present feeling in herself no reason for their adoption, she was little disposed to quarrel with precautions which might save her, and perhaps others, from a fate similar to that which she had overheard on the night of that fearful conversation at Plas Newydd. But although thus, as we have said, wholly sub-

missive and tractable, and still as free as ever from the slightest gesture or word of petulance towards others, any one who could have witnessed Lucy in her solitary moments during the first few months of her imprisonment, would have seen and marvelled at the force which she must have put upon herself, to have maintained the sweetness and gentleness of demeanour which she preserved at other times. Feeble as Lucy was, the solitude, the chafing of thought upon itself, the irksomeness of restraint, the confined posture in which she was retained, coupled with the suppressed energy of a system naturally active and accustomed to exercise, became at times almost intolerable. Writhing on her narrow couch, her hair moist and damp with the perspiration of intense suffering, every feature expressive of the struggle for freedom of the young life within, thus pent up in an unnatural restraint and debarred of its legitimate play in healthful motion and occupation; she underwent, in fact, a protracted torture, although borne, in the solitude of that dark chamber where no human eye could witness and no sympathising voice applaud, with a meekness and resignation which might have recalled the heroic fortitude and noble devotion of the early martyrs. Occasionally, indeed, when night came on, and the poor girl knew that the occupants of the

castle with the exception of her deaf attendant were far out of hearing, she found some relief from the irritability which seemed to convulse her whole system in a low, prolonged wail, so sad and terrible that its echoes startled even herself, as they rung in the vaulted roof overhead, or returned upon her ear from the corridor beyond in a fitful, melancholy cadence. On one occasion, with the delight of an operator whose experiments begin to promise the desired result, Butler overheard this terrible sound. Some accidental circumstance had induced him to defer the visit which he usually paid shortly after dusk to the foot of the tower where Lucy was confined, until the period of the family retiring to rest. It had been a day of intense suffering to Lucy, and, as Butler paused for a moment beneath the window, the kind of moaning cry we have described, forced from her lips by the anguish she had patiently endured for so many hours, rose unexpectedly upon the night-air. For a few moments, Butler stood rooted to the ground in speechless terror; with all his moral determination, he was personally a coward, and, as is frequently the case with free-thinkers, really susceptible in an unusual degree to the supernatural impressions which he affected to disbelieve. He speedily recovered him-

self, however, and with his usual decision walked straight to the kitchen, in which the servants were at that time congregated at supper, and inquired which of the women had been singing. Receiving the reply he expected, Butler mentioned the sound he had heard, and ultimately succeeded in inducing the whole party, who were somewhat re-assured by his presence, and whose terrified curiosity as to the supposed lunatic upstairs was always on the alert, to establish the fact by the demonstration of their own senses. The additional proof of Lucy's state of mind thus afforded was hardly required, but it had the effect of finally dispelling any doubts upon the subject which might still have lingered in the regions below stairs, and Butler now felt himself perfectly secure from any interruption in this quarter.

It was not until a month or two of the year succeeding Butler's occupation of Schloss Herzenfeldt had elapsed, that the tide of success, which hitherto, as we have said, had run uniformly in the attorney's favour, began apparently in some degree to turn against the success of his deep-laid schemes. The year in question was, as the reader is doubtless well aware, that in the autumn of which Harcourt so unexpectedly appeared at the castle: and it was about

six months previously to this visit that Mr. Butler first began to experience some uneasiness as to the result of the operations in which he was now embarked. Externally, it is true, every thing promised as well as ever; his locality was still undiscovered, and there was apparently nothing which could lead to any inquiry upon the subject; the servants were contented, and beginning to be reconciled to their places. The precautions Butler had taken had fully convinced them of Lucy's insanity; and in the event of her mind giving way, which during the first few months of her confinement he had fully calculated must soon take place, there was abundant testimony to prove both the humane treatment she had experienced (for Butler was careful to provide her with every personal indulgence of which she could be supposed to stand in need) and the necessity and justifiable character of the restraints which had been imposed upon her.

It was in regard to this latter point itself, the effect of his treatment upon Lucy's own mind, that Butler, during the few months preceding Harcourt's visit, had begun to see more and more that his success was extremely questionable. It is true, that during the earlier part of Lucy's long confinement, the irritability above adverted to had greatly inten-

sified,—quite as much so as Butler could have expected; and this had at first inspired him with the most sanguine hopes. But then, he could not conceal from himself that this feeling, the symptoms of which he scrutinised with extreme care, was purely physical; it did not reside in the mind, but in the body. The probability indeed was (and Butler had fully reckoned on this) that it would pass from one to the other, and in most temperaments it would doubtless have done so. But the extreme gentleness of Lucy's nature, coupled with the firm resolution which she constantly exercised not to allow any outward expression of the suffering which she underwent on this account, had prevented this result from taking place; the heart had saved the brain; and, as time wore on, Butler saw with undisguised uneasiness, not only that the character of his intended victim had risen superior to the trial, and that the reason was still sound and unclouded as ever, but that the cause itself on whose operation he had so confidently reckoned was every day diminishing, as Lucy's habitual command over its workings became more confirmed. In short, it had become quite evident to Butler for several weeks at least before the period at which our tale arrives, and must have been so to any other person, except the stolid Ulrike, who had

crossed that solitary threshold, that Lucy's mind had now, in spite of her close confinement, recovered in a considerable degree both its tone and strength. In fact, there was now absolutely, as far as Butler could see, no agent on which he could reckon to impair these restored qualities, far less to create any actual delusion, or sow the seeds of the mental disorders from which he was well aware, both from Dr. ——'s opinion and his own observation, that Lucy had even at the time of her illness at Baden-Baden been wholly free. If the reader is as much interested as we are ourselves in the character of our heroine, he will pardon us for noticing, very briefly, the causes of a result so contrary to Mr. Butler's anticipation; in fact, these causes have a considerable bearing upon the sequel of our story.

Now, with one exception, Lucy's escape from the deep-laid plot of which she was so unconsciously the object, was owing to circumstances of which Mr. Butler might well be pardoned for being wholly ignorant. He was an apt and accurate scholar in the depraved workings—even in the follies and weaknesses—of human nature; he could calculate also with nicety on the results of what is called, by rather a hard word, *idiosyncrasy*—the particular mode, that is, in which variously constituted minds

will act, in indifferent cases (those in which there is neither right nor wrong either way), according to their respective temperaments. Butler was, in fact, to the extent we have mentioned, what is commonly called a thorough judge of character; he knew precisely how bad men would act and think; how the weak, under certain conditions, would become bad; and how, where no moral ground of difference existed, persons of opposite temperament would act and think in regard to precisely the same matter. But he could not know — how should he? — the springs of conduct in a heart like Lucy's. The deep-seated love, the devotion, the trustfulness, the wells of pure and rich feeling springing up in such a mind and character, were a sealed book to him; he probably discredited the existence of such qualities; at any rate, he wholly ignored them as necessary in any way to form part of his combinations. And this had hitherto constituted Lucy's safety. We have already mentioned the important influence which her self-command and sweetness of disposition had exercised in making bearable and gradually removing what to many temperaments would have been the intolerable irritation arising from her present close confinement. But the loving heart of the young girl led to other results of still greater

importance, as they tended, not only to alleviate the present evil, but also to call away her mind from that which in Wales and afterwards at Baden-Baden had more than any thing else threatened its stability, the unceasing contemplation, namely, of the fearful doom to which since the conversation she had overheard at Plas Newydd she had firmly believed herself destined. Many causes conspired to produce this salutary diversion of thought in Lucy's mind; probably among the foremost was the intense, we had almost ventured to say the divine compassion which she now felt for her mother. Although the events of that terrible evening at Baden-Baden and the few days which had followed it were for the most part an utter blank in Lucy's memory, the scene itself, in which the degradation of her only parent had been presented to her in a form so startling and unmistakable, returned to her after her recovery in all its vividness. Shutting out the unhappy detail from her gaze, like an angel averting its face from the declension from right which it dares not excuse and yet would fain hope may be overlooked, Lucy's thoughts still at first occupied themselves almost incessantly upon her mother, pondering how far the deep-seated remorse of which she herself was the

unintentional cause, or possibly even some unperceived inroad of the inherited malady, might have led to and accounted for the unhappy circumstance she had witnessed; and ever clasping her hands, which her confined posture in the bed just permitted, in a meek but fervent supplication that, whatever else happened, this evil at least might for the future be averted from one whom she loved still so dearly. Mrs. Butler, it is true, never came to see her; often did the poor girl, with strained ear, listen for the footstep which she had hoped might be approaching, but it was always Butler alone who entered; in spite of the numerous messages which Lucy despatched to her, her mother still unaccountably kept aloof. Butler had usually some excuse to suggest for her non-appearance; and Lucy gradually became accustomed to it, as she had been formerly at Plas Newydd. And thus by degrees the link which still bound her to the outward world seemed to become feebler and feebler. Seeing week after week, month after month, no human form but Butler and Ulrike, the former appearing for a few minutes only in each morning, the latter at all times equally morose and unapproachable, the poor girl passed as it were into a dream-like existence. The shadows of the unseen

world seemed to gather around her solitude ; life, with its stir and bustle, the face of nature, the scenes of past years, appeared removed to an incalculable distance ; every hour the blood seemed to course in her veins more slowly, the light to grow dim before her eyes, her spirit more and more to be approaching the haven of its rest.

In fact, although her mind was still sound as ever, Lucy's *bodily* health had now begun to suffer severely from the long confinement. In proportion as the irritability which she had at first experienced began to diminish, her strength of constitution, which had probably formed the aliment of the former evil, appeared to give way in the same degree. At first there was no decided complaint, although it was evident that the system was being severely tried ; as the spring advanced, this resulted in a debility which seemed to increase every day ; at length, about one or two months before Harcourt's visit, pulmonary symptoms of a threatening kind showed themselves, not absolutely confirmed, but such as would require much care and vigilance to avert their consequences. To Lucy herself, as we have intimated, these indications had presented themselves much earlier, and under a more serious aspect ; she felt little doubt, especially on some of the days when her debility and

exhaustion became excessive, that her end was now rapidly approaching; and she hailed it as her best friend. Nothing, however, had really tended more than this to preserve her mind unimpaired under the formidable trial it had undergone. Not only were the calm and soothing thoughts now constantly present to her with which the gentle-hearted may often meet the last enemy, but she had a special cause of satisfaction in feeling it possible that her life might now pass away without having been subjected to that terrible trial, the worst which can befall humanity, of the loss of reason and intelligence, the degradation to a servile existence, that in which compassion is exchanged for horror, and with which sympathy can have no place. Proportionately too, as her strength decayed, and (in the language of her letter to Harcourt) she felt herself "upon her death-bed," Lucy permitted herself once more to recall the associations of Plas Newydd; the walks, the unrestrained intercourse of those yet unclouded days in Harcourt's company; the manner, the voice, the glowing words which still rang in her ear, and for which alone life would still have seemed worth living. At times, so vividly did these recollections come upon her, that the gloomy chamber in which she lay seemed to reflect the light and golden tints of the scenes upon which she had so often gazed in

Harcourt's company; once more by his side she trod the heathery moor, and listened to his glowing descriptions of lake and mountain, and drank in from his words the deep poetry and heart of love. Occasionally, too, when the long summer days came, and late in the afternoon even that gloomy prison-house, quarried as it seemed out of the solid rock, admitted through its one window some rays of sunlight, even the light heart of Lucy's youth seemed to wake up again, and a burst of joyous song, such as Harcourt had loved to listen to in the days of their brief courtship, broke strangely enough from the lips of the solitary captive.

And *very* strangely, too, quite incompatibly with the circumstances we have already mentioned as having tended to preserve Lucy's mind unimpaired during these months of intense trial, and yet, almost more powerful than them all, rose within her a feeling which she would herself have found it impossible to analyse or explain, but which, day by day, in spite of herself, began to assume more and more the character of a settled conviction. The only term by which we can describe this feeling, or the intense, inexplicable joy which it produced in Lucy's mind, is that of a *reprieve*; the sensation which a person unjustly condemned to a

cruel death might experience, when some unexpected accident has demonstrated his innocence, and, amid the shouts of a gratulating multitude, the despatch arrives which is to restore him to life and freedom. What, whence was it, this mysterious sensation? Lucy tried in vain to discover. It seemed in some way connected with that which seemed the least probable, her late illness at Baden-Baden; it was not the tranquil rest, the immunity from toil and sorrow of the peaceful grave, which, in her more usual thoughts, seemed to rise before her as her best comfort; it was a wild, bounding sense of relief and happiness, the intuition of an entire change in her whole range of thought and being; the casting to the winds of some intolerable oppression, which now appeared light and frivolous as air;—and yet, she could not arrest the thought: it was wholly inexplicable. At the moment when she fled upstairs from her mother's half-frantic blow, memory and identification seemed to give way, and nothing remained beyond but a dim chaos of unrest and terror; often as the feeling returned, and seeming as it did, more and more each time of its recurrence, to force back her thoughts to some definite time and place, although when and where she could not tell, it still remained a riddle, dark,

mysterious, and inscrutable. And yet it wound, as it were, through her lonely heart the first thread of joy and hope which it had known since the night of that solitary parting at Plas Newydd.

CHAP. VI.

"I could not do it; 'twas a dream; dark spell,
Begone; unholy enterprise, farewell;—
Alas!"

RAINE.

WE must now return to Mr. Butler, from whom the somewhat long digression contained in the preceding chapter has temporarily detained us. It will be easily understood from the circumstances we have recapitulated, that the failure of the plan on which he had calculated (apparently not without good reason) for effecting the total overthrow of Lucy's enfeebled mind, and the evident restoration of the latter to a more healthful and firm tone, had been sufficient to occasion this gentleman no small degree of uneasiness, even before Harcourt's visit had brought matters to a crisis. To this must be added that the time for any further operations was now rapidly drawing to a close. In less than four months Lucy would have attained twenty-one, and would then be competent to bar the entail, a

course which the trustees would unquestionably suggest to her, while the result of her doing so would be that his wife's interest in Cheveleigh, and the conveyance of the latter to himself, which was founded upon it, would at once be defeated and become incapable of taking effect in any event, and the deep-laid scheme which he had contrived with so much expenditure of thought and money fall to the ground, utterly and hopelessly, even supposing no more serious consequence to ensue upon its probable exposure.

The only thing to be set against Butler's disappointment in regard to the effect of the long confinement she had now undergone upon Lucy's mental powers, was the evident likelihood of her bodily health giving way under it; but this, Butler began to reflect, was a very questionable advantage. Originally, indeed, he had looked upon this as one of the main elements in his scheme; and so it undoubtedly had been, as long as he had left Lucy's mind to its own working, and merely continued a passive spectator of the result. But since the more direct part he had now taken, the consequences of such an event as her death occurring without any indications of the loss of reason would probably be very serious. Butler could not but see that in

this case the rigorous confinement to which she had been subjected, even although without remonstrance from herself, would be considered, as indeed was the fact, to have induced or at any rate greatly accelerated this result ; it was not at all clear what view an English jury might take of his part in the transaction. Even if he should escape being brought to trial, it would probably only be as a fugitive from the country, and thus the splendid prize for which he had been contending would be wholly lost to his enjoyment. And yet, what was the alternative ? — to abandon the project which he had conceived and executed with so much ingenuity, and hitherto with such success, and return to England a bankrupt in fortune, and probably, after a little inquiry, in character ; his profession sacrificed, himself wedded for life to a woman whom he had heartily despised, and of whom it had always been his intention, when she was no longer necessary for the execution of his schemes, to take the earliest opportunity of ridding himself. And yet it seemed that no other course was open to him. True, any appearance of insanity in Lucy, even now, would at once turn the tide the other way ; the seclusion, the precautions he had adopted, even if her bodily health had suffered under them, would be looked upon merely as an

error of judgment; the result would justify everything. But, unfortunately, of *this* result Butler could not but see that every day which elapsed made the probability still more remote.

The reader will perceive, therefore, that Butler, accomplished villain as he was, had gradually arrived from various causes at a position of no small difficulty; and this untoward state of things, concurring as it did with Harcourt's inopportune appearance at the Schloss, was still further complicated by the indications which Butler had for some little time past observed of a tendency to insubordination on the part of his hitherto subservient and passive confederate. At the risk of utterly exhausting the reader's patience, we must interrupt the thread of our narrative for a few moments longer, in order most cursorily to sketch the outlines of a change of no small importance which had lately been coming over Mrs. Butler's temper and character.

Strange as are the varied phenomena of our nature, there is, perhaps, nothing in it more remarkable than the way in which its conflicting passions are sometimes overruled, so as by their very turbulence and conflict to evolve some great and useful moral end. It is well known that the ships in the port of London proceeding on distant voyages, often by preference

take their supply of water from the impure and fetid stream of the Thames; it is the very intensity of these qualities, acting in a confined space and gradually neutralizing and as it were eliminating each other, which ultimately renders fit for use the fluid from which, during the first few weeks after the vessel had sailed, deadly gases, kindling on the application of a light into a blue flame, and of unknown names and qualities, were perpetually evolved. Something analogous to this, if we may venture on the comparison, appeared during her long and secluded residence in the castle of Herzenfeldt to have taken place in regard to Mrs. Butler's character. The main element in this change was one from which little good could have been anticipated; — the degrading and unwomanly indulgence which had for the first time, as we have seen, broken out in a form involving notoriety and disgrace on the evening of Lucy's attack of brain fever at Baden-Baden. No repetition of this had taken place. It was, perhaps, well that the scene which then ensued had occurred before the unhappy practice from which it arose had become hopelessly confirmed. As it was, Mrs. Butler, probably for the first time in her life, knew herself in one respect at least as she had appeared to others. To a person who had moved habitually in a different

sphere, the shock of what had occurred might not on reflection have appeared so great; but with her the case was different. The public disgrace, the degradation of her own subsequent feelings, the hardly suppressed scorn—in some instances, the sort of pitying dismay—in those she henceforth encountered, cut through to the very quick the artificial crust of character which she had allowed to grow up round her; it outraged not only the more refined tastes and habits of early life, but still more, her love of position, her egotism, her self-applause. It did not make her humble, but it left her keenly mortified; it inflicted a real and permanent pang on the seared heart, which even yet acquiesced, at any rate as a passive agent, in the commission of offences of a far deeper dye. Possibly, had her previous course of life continued, these sensations might have worn off, and the baneful indulgence once again resorted to have produced each time less shame, and gradually become chronic and habitual; but happily, at the castle there was no inducement and, in fact, no opportunity for anything of the kind. Butler, either from design or because he had now no object to serve by it did not pave the way to temptation as he had before done; and without his connivance the means of it were wholly beyond his wife's reach. Thus debarred of its

exercise, the disposition to a practice so degrading gradually died out, while the sense of shame at the open disgrace in which it had involved her became intensified in the same proportion.

And then, by degrees, the uneasiness of the sensations which Mrs. Butler now experienced led to another feeling of still greater importance; an appreciation and intense hatred of Butler, with whom she now began to connect, not only this occurrence (for which, perhaps, he might be considered less responsible), but still more the dreary isolation and agitating passions and emotions which she now began to perceive had occupied, more or less through his agency, the last few years of her life. In the solitude of Schloss Herzenfeldt the new impressions thus formed began to culminate; the sluggish waters within had been roused from their stupor, and the surface had begun to heave and swell; their agitation, fearful as it was, and inoperative for good itself, might eventually in the hands of a higher power be overruled to useful purposes. One good result which almost immediately followed upon the new feelings thus aroused was a reaction from the morbid aspect in which Mrs. Butler had for so long regarded Lucy. Not, indeed, that she yet felt anything like remorse, compassion, love: that she opposed as yet,

or even refused her further sanction to the atrocious scheme of which, without fully comprehending its details, she was still of course more or less cognizant, and had hitherto, although not required to take an active part, been the guilty confederate and accomplice. Her heart was too seared at present for anything like this; it required longer time and more powerful impressions to operate a change so incalculable; but still the animosity which Mrs. Butler now justly entertained towards her husband as the main cause of her present and past suffering, had left her accessible to better impulses, by clearing away the unnatural jealousy and aversion, which like rank and poisonous herbs had accumulated upon the soil already prepared for their reception by the avarice and selfishness of previous years.

After some time again, the violent conflict of the new elements thus called into action, worn out by its very intensity began to subside in its turn, and a further and still more hopeful phase of feeling took its place. The heart and brain, whirling in a perpetual round of troubled thought, and at last wearied and exhausted with their own efforts, sank into a state of comparative repose; not the tranquillity of a settled calm, but a blank vacant state, a sensation of utter wretchedness and desolation, capable of being

moulded for good or for further evil, as circumstances might chance. It was one of those breathing-places, as it were, mercifully and wonderfully interposed in the downward course of crime; a period preceding its last actual consummation in which the spell may still be broken and the footstep arrested on the very brink of the fatal declivity; or in which, on the contrary, if the opportunity is neglected or unobserved, the associations of long habits, coupled perhaps with some fresh form of temptation, or more commonly suggesting the past as irretrievable, and shutting out the alternatives of hope and penitence, may return with augmented force, and plunge the unhappy victim into desperate and avowed guilt. In Mrs. Butler's case the balance at present hung, perhaps, nearly equal.

It is hardly necessary to say (indeed, we have already intimated) that the changes which had been gradually operating in Mrs. Butler's mind during the last few months had not escaped her husband's observation, although he had, perhaps, hardly penetrated to their depth and intensity. In fact, having secured her general acquiescence, he had ceased to trouble himself much in regard to one whom he looked upon as a mere tool, which had now almost completed the purposes for which it was required

and might ere long be discarded without ceremony ; it was only when some instances of non-compliance with his wishes, often in regard to some indifferent matter not connected with the main project which he had in hand, had occurred, that Butler had experienced any annoyance upon her account ; frequently indeed as they occupied separate apartments, he had passed days together without seeing her. At the present moment however these symptoms of insubordination recurred to his mind in a more unpleasant aspect ; and coupled, as they were, with the causes of uneasiness which he had so long felt in regard to Lucy, and now with the still more untoward circumstance of Harcourt's unexpected visit to the castle, the reader will hardly be surprised that they threw him into the state of profound cogitation in which we have so long left him standing, and which had already continued for upwards of an hour after Harcourt's departure. For the first time in his life indeed the worthy attorney seemed fairly at a loss. His shaggy eyebrows were knit until they almost joined each other on his forehead, while the dark orbs beneath them gleamed restlessly in their sockets like the eyes of some beast at bay, wounded by the missiles of his assailants, and considering in what quarter he may best make his final plunge.

Butler's, however, was not a character to hesitate long. He saw that the crisis, the necessity for decided action had arrived ; and, once satisfied as to this, he dismissed from his mind by a singular exertion of self-command the whole details of the process by which he had arrived at this conclusion, as well as the previous combinations on which he had bestowed so much time and labour but which had now proved insufficient for success, and bent his entire energies on discovering the best mode of carrying into effect the decisive measures which he perceived must imperatively be adopted.

It was not long before his ready wit, aided as heretofore by a stroke of good fortune to which we shall advert more particularly in a future chapter, had developed a course of proceeding which should meet the entire difficulties of the case, and convert an occasion which had threatened ruin and disaster into one of complete success. The idea had, indeed, dawned upon Butler's mind during his recent conversation with Harcourt, and had to some extent modified some of his statements to the latter. Now, however, in the interval which had elapsed since Harcourt's departure, he had discussed it in all its bearings ; and he proceeded to carry it out without hesitation or remorse. On one point only he still

appeared for a few minutes to retain some doubt; it was in regard to Mrs. Butler. Apparently he had at first decided against making her a party to the course of operations, whatever it was, which he now contemplated, for on quitting the room where this long period of reflection had taken place, he seemed about to descend the staircase in a direction opposite to his wife's apartment. He paused, however, on the head of the stairs, and after a few moments' reflection retraced his steps and proceeded leisurely to Mrs. Butler's room, muttering at the same time half-aloud: "No, no, she must be art and part; we have worked together so far, and she *must* go through with it. Besides, a second pair of hands is indispensable; without them, there might be some little risk; with them, detection is simply impossible. It's a little unpleasant work; but bah!" (and the worthy attorney shrugged his shoulders) "we *must* dirty our fingers a little, sometimes; and I shall sleep all the sounder to-night when it's over."

"How, though, Mrs. B., if you were to be unamiable, and split upon me?" exclaimed Butler, as he again paused for a moment with his hand on his wife's door; "You've hardly been quite the thing this last month or two, I think. Well; I'm not much afraid of it; I don't *much* think you will

venture to disobey any little request I have to make. No, no; we've gone together too long for that. Besides, you won't be told the detail till quite the last thing. So here goes." And with this brief soliloquy, Butler turned the handle of the door, and uncereemoniously entered his wife's apartment. What took place there will perhaps be more conveniently reserved for the commencement of a new chapter.

CHAP. VII.

"Oh! Heaven! th' intolerable load is gone;
I breathe once more, I see the blessed sun."

NORTHOVER.

WHEN Butler entered the room, he found its occupant seated at her toilette table, with a gloomy and dejected air upon her countenance less indicative of thought than of settled melancholy. Her abstraction had been so great that she had not heard Butler's footstep, and started on perceiving who the visitor was, such an event being now indeed of rare occurrence. Butler spoke first; he had assumed a manner which had been familiar to him in his interviews with his wife before their marriage, of interest and sympathy.

"You look pale and ill," he said, "Clara; I am sorry to see it."

"I should think you can hardly be surprised at it," answered Mrs. Butler, without raising her eyes from the ground, on which she had again allowed them to drop after Butler's entrance.

"No, indeed," replied Butler; "you have had a most trying part to play, and you have done it to perfection; your assistance has been invaluable to us. I hope soon, very soon now, to release you from your present irksome position; but there is still something to be done, for which I must have your co-operation personally; in fact, to ensure this is the object of my present visit here."

Mrs. Butler looked up at her husband: there was something different in her manner to what he had ever seen there; an expression of languor and despondency wholly different from the irritation which she had manifested on one or two occasions during the last few weeks. When she spoke, it was in a tone which corresponded to the emotions which were now betrayed by her countenance; not petulantly, but in a slow, measured cadence, rather wearily, as if the subject of their conversation had lost all interest for her, or even excited painful feelings. "I am heart-sick," she said, "Mr. Butler, of these schemes and plans; I see what I have lost by them, but I can see nothing that I, or yourself either, have gained. I have lost fortune, position, self-respect, almost hope. Shut up in this wretched dungeon, debarred from all society, and thrown back upon my own thoughts (which Heaven knows are

none of the happiest); such has been my life for this twelvemonth past, while before that I have nothing to look back upon but a period of secret, and sometimes even open degradation and disgrace. I repeat, I am weary to the very soul of these schemes, and could almost wish for anything to happen that would put an end to them." And Mrs. Butler pressed her hands forcibly together, with an air of utter desolate wretchedness.

"You can hardly mean, I should think," answered Butler, "to charge me with what happened at Baden-Baden? That, at least, was no part of my schemes, as you call them; it would have been a very hazardous speculation for any one to have calculated on a woman,—a lady,—exposing herself in *that* form. But come, Clara," Butler continued, more kindly, seeing that this sarcasm had told upon his listener, whose manner however still evinced a kind of dejection and feeling of shame rather than irritability; "I see that you are not yourself to-day, and I will not add to your discomfort by recalling circumstances which I have no doubt are wholly forgotten by this time in other quarters. As regards our stay here, I feel as much as you do the gloomy and secluded character of the castle, and I have often thought how dreary such a residence

must be for you ; but it has been unavoidable, and I am now happy to tell you that I hope a very few days more will terminate it."

Mrs. Butler looked up, in spite of herself, with some degree of interest. Her husband continued. "Yes, if all goes well, I see little doubt that, in a very short time,—say by this day month,—we shall be at Cheveleigh again, with everything pleasurable round us ; or, even if an actual residence there were undesirable for any reason, there will be the magnificent income from it (for the rents have now very nearly paid off the charge upon your temporary interest) wholly at your disposal, which will furnish you with the means of unbounded enjoyment, wherever you may like to settle. In one of these continental cities in particular, say Munich or Vienna, or Paris if you like it, your position with such a fortune would be really princely. The only thing is, that there is something to be done;—in fact, it must be done at once, this very evening;—in which, as I have said, I *must* have your co-operation ; and I will not disguise from you that it is—that perhaps—in fact, that it may require on your part some degree of strength of character, some of the good sense in short, which, without any flattery,

I have been charmed to see you show all through this business."

Butler paused for a moment or two, and then continued. "To tell the truth, Clara, it is not now the question whether we *will* grasp the splendid prize that is before us; the fact is, we *must* do it; at least, the only alternative is instant detection and exposure."

Mrs. Butler started violently at these words; she did not speak, but her face expressed visible consternation; the dejection which she had previously shown was exchanged for nervous agitation and excitement. Butler continued.

"It is too true," he said. "I dare say you heard that loud ring at the bell of the castle gate, an hour or two since? It was a visitor; an Englishman. He professed to have been sketching in the neighbourhood, and to have visited the castle only out of curiosity, and his manner was quite gentlemanly enough—singularly, too, his name was the same as one with which we are already familiar, Harcourt; a different person, of course—his manner, I say, would quite have borne out his assumed character. I have a good eye, however, for faces, and, after a few minutes, I recollected our friend perfectly; he was a *Bow Street-runner*. His real name is Hath-

away; he was employed in some business with which I was connected about three years since; a few judicious questions enabled me to find out that I was right in my conjecture, without giving him any clue to my suspicions. Now I need hardly tell you Clara what *this* visit means; it means, simply, that we are discovered, detected; not only that the plan we have been working out so successfully together is blown to the winds, but that we are ourselves in the utmost danger, certainly of public disgrace, perhaps of trial and imprisonment. But now, there *is* a mode of escaping all this, and not only escaping it, but at the same time securing all the objects we have been aiming at during the last year or two. It is just the position for a bold stroke; one which shall convert what appears the most imminent ruin into triumph and success."

"I do not understand what you mean," answered Mrs. Butler.

"Well, then, I will explain," replied her husband. "I cannot go into the detail, for time rather presses just at present, and besides, there are parts of it which I have hardly yet arranged myself; but I can show you generally how matters stand. Now you see, during the last twelvemonth we have been pursuing a course of action which, not to blink

matters, is neither strictly legal, nor such as society would look upon with any great amount of favour. In short, if the thing were to be blown upon in its present stage, not only would Cheveleigh with its twenty thousand pounds a-year be hopelessly gone, but our two selves would, as I have said, run a great chance of being transferred to Newgate or some such place for a year or two; and at any rate there would be the certainty of exposure and disgrace. The very children in the streets would hoot at us. This, I say, is what will happen if our proceedings are interrupted, as this most ominous visit seems to indicate they are in great danger of being, at their *present stage*. But now, there is one circumstance which, if it could only occur, would change the aspect of things immediately and altogether; would perfectly justify all we have done during the last twelvemonth; would give us Cheveleigh or Cheveleigh's worth without the shadow of doubt or suspicion; and would make the present inquiry (of which Mr. Hathaway's presence here to-day is symptomatic), and those who suggested it, whether Frederick Akehurst or the trustees, appear a wholly needless and uncalled-for proceeding. You will ask, what this one circumstance can be: I will tell you. Supposing,

for a moment, that something were to happen *much worse* than the brain fever at Baden-Baden; worse in its character, its results; some evident and unmistakeable, say some fatal, act of insanity? Do you not see that, in an instant, the precautions we have been employing, even if not according to the strict letter of the law, would assume a wholly different aspect in the eyes of everyone? Why, they would only say we had not been strict enough. Now then, suppose again, that by a most singular, most opportune discovery, which I only made a few days since, it were in our power, this very evening, to bring about such a result as I have just mentioned, — *or something which would, beyond the possibility of detection, appear to be such a result* — our own share in it being wholly unknown, wholly without risk, wholly undiscoverable even by the most acute investigation; why then, Clara, if I know you and myself right, I should say that I do not think we are either of us fools enough to throw away such an opportunity, not only of averting the imminent danger which threatens us, but of reaping the golden reward of all the drudgery and anxiety we have gone through during these last two years. Of course," continued Butler after a slight pause, during which Mrs. Butler remained silent, "of

course, you cannot understand very plainly what I propose as yet, and I fear I have no time just now to go into the details. However, this is of less consequence, as all that requires to be done at present is for me to visit the room in the tower and make an alteration in the previous mode of confinement, — give more liberty, in fact; — and for this, of course, I need not trouble you to accompany me. I will return however in the evening; or rather I should be glad if you could come down to me there, say at ten o'clock (or eleven perhaps will be better), into the left-hand sitting-room, the one where I usually write; you will take the precaution, of course, to see that there are none of the domestics about, and to step softly. When I see you there, I will explain the full particulars of what I propose; and remember, Clara, I shall reckon; I shall *reckon*," repeated Butler, with marked emphasis, bending at the same time upon his listener (who had looked up at the forcible utterance he imparted to his last words) one of those fearful glances before the evil power of which her weaker nature had twice already in its hour of trial sunk subdued, "I shall reckon implicitly on your co-operation. I claim your *promise*." And saying this, Butler quitted the apartment.

With very little delay he proceeded as he had apprised Mrs. Butler to the scene of Lucy's long imprisonment. He found Ulrike at her post, and the door between her apartments and Lucy's standing open, as was usually the case during the daytime. Ulrike's own door was at all hours both of day and night by the general desire of the household, kept strictly double-locked; for the purpose of communicating with her from without, an ingenious contrivance, which her total deafness rendered necessary, had been constructed by the ingenuity of Mr. Jelps. This was a machine, something resembling an Indian punkah. It was pulled by a string from without, and created a wind and motion in the room, which after a minute or two never failed of attracting the observation of one or other of Ulrike's unimpaired senses; the latter, in fact, were acute in proportion to her deafness. At night, the cord was removed from the punkah and attached by Ulrike to her own arm.

At present, Butler's performance on this ingenious instrument from without resulted, after the lapse of a minute or two, in Ulrike Pfeiffer being heard to rise from her chair, and turn the heavy key in the door, by which Butler then, raising the latch, admitted himself into the apartment and proceeded to Lucy's room. Ulrike was on excellent terms with her

employer, whose dietary, including the supply of Kirsche wasser, was framed on the most liberal scale; and she now followed him into the inner room, mopping and mowing with her hideous goggle eyes and double chin in a manner which left it a question on the mind of the spectator whether her face, like some of the quaint gurgoyles in mediæval stone carving, deserved to be classed more among the grotesque or the terrible. Lucy greeted her step-father as usual with a faint smile. She was lying, where she had in fact lain with little change for nearly a twelvemonth past, in the bed which had been removed from one of the furnished rooms for the purpose, closely confined in a horizontal position by three tight leather thongs passing from side to side of the bed, the uppermost crossing her chest and arms: it was possible for her slightly to move both her hands underneath the strap, but her rising in bed or using her arms in any manner would have been out of the question. Besides this, as a further precaution, a small leather collar padded with some coarse woollen substance encircled the poor girl's neck, a ring at one end of the collar being attached to a chain, which was itself secured to a strong staple in the wall overhead. The collar was loose, and as little cumbrous as was compatible with security; and the chain was of sufficient length to

allow of her rising into a sitting posture at meal-times, when the upper thong across the bed was slackened by Ulrike for the same purpose, and then replaced when the meal was concluded.

Butler returned Lucy's salutation with more than usual kindness; she had seemed, on his entrance, preoccupied with her own thoughts, but the cordiality of his manner, coupled with an appearance of satisfaction and relief, was so marked, that she could not refrain from directing an inquiring look at his face as if to ascertain the cause. Butler noticed the look, and replied to it although Lucy had not spoken. "I see, Miss Akehurst," he said, "that you divine that I have some good news for you. I have. I can hardly tell you with what satisfaction I have noticed during these last few weeks such a marked improvement in your general health; that cough, indeed, seems to trouble you at times; but I am convinced that it is no more than what a freedom from this restraint, and possibly a little fresh air and exercise, would at once remove. And this I am happy to tell you I now feel quite authorised in proposing. It would hardly be prudent perhaps to make an entire change at once, so that I am afraid we must still keep you a prisoner to this room for a week or two longer; but I really think it wholly

unnecessary that these personal restraints should be continued any longer; and, therefore, I propose at once to remove them. I have been long thinking of doing so; from what I have noticed lately, the alteration will be perfectly safe,"

Lucy repaid this welcome intelligence with a beaming smile of thanks, and Butler, without further delay, proceeded to execute his intentions. The straps across the bed were of course easily removed, but in taking off the kind of collar which confined the neck some difficulty occurred. The chain attached to this was fastened with a padlock of which Butler kept the key. He had brought, or professed to bring, the latter with him, but either from its not belonging to the lock or some other cause it became hampered, and the fastening could not be removed. Butler seemed chagrined. "My dear child," he said, "I beg ten thousand pardons for my awkwardness. I am afraid I cannot unfasten this, and I only know one person in the house who can, but really I do not like to suggest his coming here. Would you mind that stupid fellow Jelps just coming up to try the lock? he is rather clever, oddly enough, at such matters." Lucy's heart was too full of the prospect of returning liberty to make much demur, and Butler descended to the kitchen to summon Jelps,

leaving matters upstairs in the charge of old Ulrike. To the Northumbrian, who happened to be indoors, Butler explained what he wanted; adding, for the information of the other servants who were both in the kitchen, that he had been for some time thinking of liberating the young lady from the personal restraint she had undergone, and that her state to-day seemed favourable for his doing so. "Miss Akehurst," he said, "would still be confined to her own room for the present, and the door between that apartment and Ulrike's now always kept locked; so that he trusted the other inmates of the house would see that there was no possible ground for apprehension in what he proposed doing." This intimation was received with some shrugs of the shoulders, but on the whole seemed to meet with no positive disfavour; Jelps volunteered, willingly enough, to try his hand on the refractory lock. His attempts, however, were unsuccessful; the key after various attempts at length refused to turn either way, and eventually broke in the padlock. "We must try some other plan," said Butler, after a few minutes; "fetch one of the kitchen knives, Jelps—not too large a one; I can easily cut through the collar; or stay, get the razor from my dressing-room, it will be sharper." The razor was brought,

and Jelps modestly retired to the door of the apartment. "You won't be frightened, my dear, at feeling cold steel so near you?" said Butler, as he proceeded to pass the instrument between the collar and Lucy's fair throat; "I will be extremely careful; after all, it is only what we gentlemen have to submit to every morning." To tell the truth, Lucy *did* feel unspeakably frightened; an involuntary shudder, the reproduction of the feeling which she had so strangely experienced on the first day of her meeting with Butler at Cheveleigh, ran through her frame, and in spite of herself she trembled from head to foot. Subduing this feeling however she gave a laughing assent, and Butler, having separated the fastening with little difficulty, at length freed Lucy from her restraint. The collar when cut still required some force to pass it over Lucy's neck, and Butler, closing the razor, laid it down on a kind of bracket which stood at a little distance above the bed, to allow of his using both his hands for that purpose. He then after a few kind words to Lucy proceeded to leave the room, dismissing Jelps at the same time. Lucy however called her step-father back from the door. Something in the sense of recovered freedom, as well as in the evident gentleness and interest of Butler's manner, quite

subduing the momentary repugnance she had again felt, had suddenly prompted her to ask a question which, under other circumstances, she would have thought it impossible could ever have crossed her lips. "Mr. Butler," she said, "you have been very kind to me on more than one occasion; I hope nothing may lead you to repent of what you have now done. I do not much fear it will myself. Of course, I know generally what has passed, but I feel now very different to what I did before my illness. My strength seems every day less and less, and I cannot but hope now that I may quit this world without becoming the terrible burden to you and others which at one time I feared I might be. And this has given me the courage to ask you a question, Mr. Butler; it is not, I trust, unmaidenly, or in forgetfulness of what is past. No; I feel that my time on this earth now will probably be very short, and therefore it is I do not scruple to ask it. Mr. Butler, I know you will tell me truly; do you know, have you ever heard any thing of—— Mr. Harcourt, since that day when I returned the letter; has he ever seen my mother? has there been any thing, any communication between you?"

Mr. Butler was wholly unprepared for this question; it required nearly as great an effort as he had

exerted on the occasion of Harcourt's visit that morning to reply to it. He did so after a slight interval, but in a hurried and somewhat abrupt manner, and in words which the reader may perhaps recall as having been uttered under very different circumstances; "No, indeed, nothing of the kind; nothing whatever." And feeling some embarrassment from his position, he quitted the room as he spoke rather hastily, sending out Ulrike before him, and, as he had promised, double-locking the door of communication upon its occupant. *The razor remained where he had left it.*

Much too absorbing however were Lucy's thoughts, for her to notice this or any other external circumstance. She scarcely even felt her restored freedom; one intense, overmastering thought engrossed her whole being. Like the "open sesame" of the fable, Butler's last sentence, coupled with his tone and manner of uttering it, had unlocked the mystery of the past; the door, which had for so long been as an impenetrable barrier to her perplexed thought, now stood wide open, and invited her to enter. Those words! she had heard them once before;—when?—where?

Gradually, there rose before her another scene, anterior to Ulrike, to the gloomy castle, and the cham-

ber of her long imprisonment. It was a darkened apartment too; the scene of suffering and illness; stretched upon her bed in one corner, lay a feeble, pallid girl, just awakened from a long rest, the repose of weariness and pain, half sleep, half trance. But there were kind faces round her, gentle footsteps moved to and fro in the room. There was one in particular; a gentleman, a stranger; he had been often there before; his looks expressed sympathy and interest. He was conversing with some other person; who was the latter? She knew him, of course she did; it was Mr. Butler. What were they saying? Something about herself, surely; it was unmistakeable. She could not recall the exact words, but they were speaking of her illness, and of something else connected with it; the stranger had asked some questions; it related, yes, she remembered it perfectly, to her mother's family; it was much the same in purport as Hilkiath Owen had asked on that fearful evening at Plas Newydd; "Had there ever been any thing of the kind before in the family?" And then, the *very identical* words, the voice, the manner, rose before her; it was Butler who spoke, as he had done just before to herself; "No, indeed, nothing of the kind; nothing whatever."

It was certain; it was clear before her as

daylight ; nothing should ever now tear it from her ; it was her passport to the world of intellect and life. There was, indeed, some strange mystery ; the statement wholly conflicted with that which Butler had made at Plas Newydd ; Lucy could in no way reconcile them, or explain the discrepancy. But still, there it was. And the liberated girl, now indeed, doubly liberated, bent her young head upon her bosom, and with a burst of hope and returning happiness such as she had not known for months past, blessed Heaven for its mercy which had reversed her once intolerable doom.

CHAP. VIII.

“ As men in the night-watches,
When the moon's dull axles roll,
And fiends with foul contumely vex
The mute imprisoned soul ;
Some in their dreams seem banded
On the winds that toss the deep,
Or plunge in cold dark waters,
And drowning wake from sleep ;
Or on some ghastly precipice
That towers above the plain,
They tread the brink continually
With reeling eye and brain.”

FROM THE GERMAN OF COPPINGER.

THE remainder of this important day of which we are now detailing the occurrences was passed by Mr. Butler in very much his usual manner, excepting that on the pretext of attending to various domestic details, (of which he had assumed the entire management since the family had resided at the Schloss,) he contrived to be seen by some one or other of the domestics, either in his own room or in various parts of the castle, at short intervals up to his ordinary dinner hour. He partook of this meal

sparingly, and then resumed the writing with which he had been occupied at the time of Harcourt's visit. Jelps usually waited upon his master after dinner, and on the present occasion Butler found some employment for him about the room, which ensured his presence there with brief exceptions until nearly nine o'clock, when the servants were in the habit of having supper together downstairs, retiring to rest shortly afterwards. This, as we have already mentioned, was the only meal of which Ulrike partook with the rest of the household. It had scarcely commenced, before Butler rang the loud bell suspended on the top of the joint staircase leading to the family and servants' rooms ; Jelps appeared in answer to the summons.

"I am afraid I am disturbing you at supper, Jelps," said his master, good-humouredly ; "I wished to know if Ulrike had come down yet?"

"Hur be in the kitchen noo," said Jelps, hastily disposing of a huge fragment of the gritty black bread which adorned the supper-table, and on which his northern appetite had just fastened at the time Butler's bell rang.

"I very much wish," said Butler, "that one of the maids would go up with her, when she returns to her room, and knock at Miss Akehurst's door ; she need

not go in, of course, but I should be glad to know that every thing is right. I hope and trust there is no risk in the course I have adopted ; but I cannot help feeling a little uneasy for the next day or two ; there was a slight wildness of manner about her to-day too, which I did not quite like."

Jelps seemed to hesitate for a moment, and Butler continued, " You can go with the girl, Jelps, as far as Ulrike's door, if she seems at all frightened. I would go up myself, but I am extremely occupied with this writing at present."

The stout Northumbrian shook visibly at his master's suggestion. He seemed a little ashamed of himself, however, and it was not in a very decided tone that he faltered out some expressions of dissent : " He didn't knaw, he was sure ; it was sair lonesome like up yon after nightfall ; he'd be glad to be excoosed, anyhoo."

" Why, nonsense, Jelps," replied his master, " you don't mean to say you are afraid of a poor young thing like that, and with a double-locked door between you, do you ? Besides, I really do believe she is all but restored now, thank Heaven. However," continued Butler, seeing that Jelps still hesitated, shuffling in an awkward manner with his feet, and occasionally pulling a lock of the hair above his forehead

as an intimation that, profound as his devotion to his employer was, the present seemed almost too difficult a test to propose to it, "I suppose I must put a little spirits into you all. Suppose you drink this glass of Malaga to Miss Akehurst's speedy recovery, Jelps, and take the other down to the maids" (Butler had filled two glasses as he spoke, from a bottle in a recess of the room), "I daresay you'll all be brave enough after that. Just let Susan speak to the young lady through the door, that's all; I only want to be sure that she's perfectly well, before we go to bed."

The Malaga produced quite as much effect as Butler had anticipated. As the generous fluid coursed through his veins, Mr. Jelps found the terrors of this nocturnal expedition greatly diminished; and finally, on Ulrike retiring for the night, escorted her with the other two domestics, who insisted on their "all keeping together" on this formidable occasion, with a tolerable air of *nonchalance* to the much dreaded apartments in the tower. Lucy having replied to the query of the Gloucestershire damsel (propounded in a half-whisper, half-scream through the keyhole), that she was perfectly well and wanted nothing further that night, the adventurous trio retired pretty much as they had come,

with the exception of a slight acceleration of pace in the latter portion of their retreat, which eventually, as the Welsh cook accidentally trod upon her own dress and, finding her progress thereby arrested, announced the fact by a shrill cry of terror in her native tongue, assumed the character of a total rout, which sent them pellmell in breathless haste into the kitchen. Ulrike, however, had been distinctly heard to bolt her own door in the inside, and as Mr. Jelps had had the precaution in passing to double lock his own (which the reader will recollect led out by the winding staircase and corridor to the octagonal tower where Lucy's room was situated, and was *the only mode* by which the latter was accessible), tranquillity was gradually restored.

Shortly after this, the whole party feeling sleepy—as well they might, for the Malaga had been tolerably drugged by Butler, to prevent even the possibility of any sound being overheard during the night,—a vote of adjournment to bed was proposed, and carried without a dissentient voice. Mr. Jelps took with him, as usual, the key of the door leading on to the corridor, which he deposited in its accustomed place under his own pillow, and also secured his room door on the inside. And the whole of the three domestics retained quite

a sufficiently strong impression of the occurrences of the day to be able to testify at any future time, not only to Mr. Butler's not having gone near the tower until the time of their retiring to rest (when Mr. Jelps's habitual arrangements of course precluded his doing so without the cognizance of that worthy individual), but also to the fact of Lucy's having, up to the same period, been in a condition of undoubted health and safety.

Very differently were the same hours of that eventful afternoon and evening passed by one other occupant of the ruined Schloss. Mrs. Butler, after her husband had left her as mentioned in the preceding chapter, remained long seated in the posture which she had retained throughout the interview, at times pressing her hands firmly together, with the same expression of dejection and wretchedness which we have already described. Gradually, however, the working of her features, and the flushing of her cheeks, which had previously been deadly pale, showed that other and more exciting emotions were beginning to assume their sway in her mind. At length she rose from her seat, and, muttering to herself from time to time some half audible sentences, paced up and down the room.

Terrible, indeed, was the conflict of feelings which

now raged in that forlorn and unaided heart. It seemed as if the whole of the contending impulses which during the last few weeks, and, in fact, ever since her acquaintance with Mr. Butler commenced, had in turns agitated and swayed her breast, now recurred to her at once with increased violence, concentrating into this one brief moment of time the fierce struggle which had extended over so many days and months previously. No comparison could probably convey to the reader's mind an adequate impression of the violence of this contest, pent up within such narrow limits, or the mode in which the whole moral and intellectual being of the unhappy subject became gradually, as it were, disrupted by the energy of the emotions thus aroused, and forced into active impulse and agitation. Perhaps the nearest resemblance to it would be the scene so frequently witnessed on some of the great rivers of the North, when a sudden thaw breaks up the ice which the severity of the winter has accumulated on their surface, hurling together its dislocated and groaning masses with frantic violence, until at length the ponderous barrier floats away in a thousand fragments down the stream, and the waters, so long concealed from view, are seen flowing tranquilly in their natural and accustomed channel.

It was not for some hours that the conflict of feelings which had so profoundly agitated Mrs. Akehurst's hitherto cold and unimpressive heart began to show any appearance of abating in its severity. Gradually, however, the frame, incapable of supporting any longer a struggle of such vehemence, began to exhibit symptoms of exhaustion, and demand an interval of rest and forgetfulness. It was just as day declined,—the last sunset that should ever wrap in splendour the glowing horizon for more than one of those whom our tale has now congregated in the remote locality of Schloss Herzenfeldt,—that Mrs. Butler, worn out with the mental agitation of the last few hours, found unconsciousness stealing over her, and seating herself on a low chair by the side of the massive walnut-wood bedstead, the coverlid of which served as a prop to her head, was soon buried in a profound and apparently calm slumber. At first, her utter weariness prevented any objects from occupying her mind as she thus slept, other than a kind of instinctive sensation of intense repose. But the startling images of the past and present would not long be refused admittance into that unguarded chamber; gradually, a strange combination of circumstances, partly real and partly imaginary, such as compose the staple of

all dreams, arranged themselves in a distinct form before her mind, the workings of her face, and the cold dew which stood upon her forehead, betraying the horror and agony of the imprisoned soul within. It was not at first any recollection of *recent* occurrences which thus presented itself to Mrs. Butler's sleeping view. On the contrary, her dream was connected, strangely enough, with a subject of which for many years she had hardly thought except as an isolated fact; the loss, namely, of the son of whom (as we mentioned in the opening chapter of our story) Mr. and Mrs. Akehurst had been deprived in infancy. Once more, Mrs. Butler was at Cheveleigh; the rich saloons, looking incredibly more brilliant than they formerly did by the contrast of the dreary home she had lately occupied, rose around her in beauty and splendour; she was admired, courted, surrounded by every appliance of luxury and enjoyment. On a sudden, the aspect of things darkened; it was still Cheveleigh, but a wailing infant (she distinctly recalled its features notwithstanding the lapse of time) lay in its cot beside her; she had never reared her offspring herself, but some one had brought in this child, and told her she must now do so. And now the scene changed; she was in the small drawingroom in

Brook Street, where Butler had first intimated his accursed projects. That part of the scene, however, was absent; instead of Butler, her companion was still the young child, which now lay breathing evenly, and, for the first time, the sere heart of the mother thought, looking *very* beautiful, in the peaceful slumber of infancy. Suddenly the door was burst open; two men entered; they were the sheriff's officers (their faces were stamped ineffaceably on her brain) who had executed the writ on the day of Butler's fatal proposition. Now, however, they came to seize *her*; "She had killed her child," they said, "and must be carried off at once to trial." In vain she pointed to the sleeping infant by her side. The men were inexorable; she was pinioned, and carried off in their grasp; the yells and hootings of a savage mob were in her ear. Strangely enough, her conductors took her to a church. Some faint impression of surrounding objects, some half-conscious look which she had thrown around the building after the conclusion of that terrible service, showed her that it was the same where she had given her hand to Butler; again she was led up to that altar, now manacled and fettered; the chains seemed made of ice, their clasp round her sent such a deadly chill through her whole frame. Within the altar-rails lay her

child, still slumbering peacefully in its cot as before ; there was no one else visible there, but Butler was at her side, accusing her of the murder, setting it out with all its detail and aggravations. "Strange," she thought, "that they should charge *me* with murder ; me, its own mother ; and the child lying alive and well before them." She dreamt that as she said this, half aloud, a shivering, rattling sound behind her made her look round. She saw now that the church was not empty, as when she had last entered it, but filled from end to end ; pews and galleries, vistas and spaces stretching out interminably into dim distance ; but its occupants were *skeletons* ; and, as Butler continued speaking, at every interval between the sentences, a stir and rustle passed along their lines, as if in approval ; and when he finished, they all rose up and grinned and chattered at her, pointing at her with fleshless hands, and with a derision in their hollow eyes which was intolerable. She then heard a voice from within the altar-rails ; there was still no one visible there. "Let the pen write," the voice said ; "strike the chains from her ; let the child be given her to bear with her in life and through doom." She was conducted into the small vestry where she remembered to have signed the register ;— a pen of fire lay on the table ; as if instinct with

life, it darted towards her, and traced some letters, she knew not what, upon her forehead; but she felt the keen anguish in her brain as they pierced through the flesh and bone. At the same time some one placed the child in her arms, and she wandered out. Now, wherever she passed, all living things seemed to shun and flee from her; they stood at a distance, pointing to the letters on her forehead: "Read there," they said, "read there;" but no one told what the words were. At length, she reached the side of a still, clear stream; her reflection was in the water; the writing stood out in letters of fire, distinct and visible, "The Child-Murderess." She tried to plunge in the drowning depths, but the element fled hissing from her; she gained the bank, she roamed in never-ending wanderings, days, months, years; over the lava flood, through the scorching desert, across the jagged rocks and in the seams of the terrible glacier, all things shunning and avoiding her, the child still in her arms, slumbering on and on, as if for ever.

At length, on the brow of a dizzy precipice, Butler again met her; there was barely standing-room for both. He pointed to the characters on her brow: "Do you wish them removed?" he said; "it *may* be done" (he had used the words, she

knew, once before); "and, if you choose, it shall be; but I must have the child, I wish to kill it; give it me, and the writing shall be effaced." "Never," she cried, "never, if I die." Suddenly, with the sensation of falling from a fearful height, and a wrench that seemed to part soul and body, she found herself on a green, level plain, where the birds now sang round her, and the sun shone bright, and the voices of living men and women rung joyously in the open field. And then, at length, the child woke. She stooped to kiss it, and, as she did so, it looked up smiling in her face, and passed its tiny hand over her brow, and the sentence of her doom was obliterated and wiped out for ever.

The dream was ended, and Mrs. Butler's sleep fled with it. The room was piercingly cold, and quite dark. For one moment, bewilderment and gloom hung about that lonely chamber, and peopled it with the spectres of her dream, and the darker realities of her own past being. But the mother's heart was stirred within her; recovering her seat, after the first involuntary movement of terror, she laid her head again upon the coverlid, and, insensible to the cold and darkness, wept long and very bitterly. The Angel of Mercy had smitten the rock, and the waters gushed forth and flowed abundantly on the arid plain.

CHAP. IX.

"There is an ocean, vast and wide,
Engendered in whose quenchless tide
The silver-bartered purple's dye
Wells in fresh stains, eternally."

ÆSCH. Agam. 958.

THERE was an old French clock on the landing outside the apartments occupied by the family at Schloss Herzenfeldt, which struck on wires, with an imitation of the tolling of the deep bell of the cathedral which was represented on its case. As the last stroke of this sounded eleven, Mr. Butler was surprised, and, in fact, a little startled, by the door of his room opening and Mrs. Butler's entrance. He had expected, notwithstanding his request in the morning, that it would have been necessary for him himself to go in quest of her; and, after the first trepidation caused by her unexpected appearance had subsided, was glad to find that she had anticipated his wishes. Mrs. Butler was completely dressed in deep black, and as if for walking; she did not speak, but stood near the entrance of the room looking Butler full in

the face, who was seated at its farther extremity. Mrs. Butler was intensely pale, and her eyes were red and swollen, evidently showing how she had passed the last few hours; but Butler did not notice, or care to remark upon, these indications; the change in his wife's dress he did refer to. "I could almost fancy you had anticipated what I am going to tell you," said Butler, "by your wrapping up so; you will find it useful perhaps where we are going to-night. However, I must not waste time, as there is much to be said and done. You may as well be seated though, Clara; it is all the same money as standing. Well, as you will," continued Butler, seeing that his wife refused the chair he had placed for her. He then returned to his own seat, and continued,—

"Clara," he said, "I am pleased with your coming here; it is a guarantee to me that you are prepared to act with decision, and without being deterred by any foolish and unnecessary scruples. And now, Clara, let us speak plainly and freely to each other. Of course, we have not been working together in this matter for the last two years without both of us *fully understanding* what we were about. We have had a common object; a very worthy and sufficient one, *I* say, however the divines and moralists may

talk ; at any rate, it was one that you and I consider adequate, and we are the only persons whose opinions need be considered. But there was an obstacle in the way ; an insuperable one, if it was allowed to remain. Well ; we agreed to remove it. We have been working together very harmoniously, and hitherto with entire success, for that purpose ; the reasonable presumption was that a few more months would complete the whole business.

“ Now, however, an unexpected difficulty has arisen ; we are watched, we are in danger, in personal danger, over and above the failure of that which we have been contriving together so long and patiently ; we are in imminent risk of exposure, infamy, perhaps lengthened imprisonment. All this I told you in a general way this morning ; and I am greatly pleased that by your presence here you show you admit the emergency, and are prepared to meet it, and at the same time to bring our projects at once, and without any risk, to a successful issue, by *any* means that I may suggest. Now then let me explain them ; and mind, Clara, I rely on your good sense in what I have to say.

“ Now, I will confess to you (in fact I think you know), that it would have been more pleasant to me if we could have carried our point without personal

violence; one dislikes anything like a scene, of course; and a few months more would have given us all we want quietly enough. But that cannot be now; and so you see, to cut this short, we must just anticipate matters. Clara, that girl must be got rid of to-night; and I *must* have (I would do without it if I could), I *must* have your co-operation in it. The plan I propose is this.

“You see, every one in the house fully believes in her insanity; they have had, as they think, the strongest evidence of it; and besides, there is the corroboration of what took place at Baden-Baden. Now, to-day I have freed her from personal restraint; why not? I had no legal justification for employing it so long. Unfortunately, by a deplorable accident, the means of self-destruction have been left within her reach; the lock of the fastenings which confined her had become hampered, and Jelps fetched a razor from my room to cut the leather to which they were attached. The instrument was overlooked; was left within her reach; in a sudden accession of frenzy, she makes a fatal use of it. That is how the newspapers will put it; in reality, *we save her the trouble*. We know that she couldn't last many months longer; and as it makes no great difference to her, and all the difference to us, we just (as I have said)

anticipate matters. Really, it is only what people do, in various forms, almost constantly."

"I see, of course, what you would say," continued Butler, observing that his listener still continued silent; "you mean, that you cannot at all see how we are to do this without discovery. Jelps locks his own room door, and sleeps with the key of the door leading to hers under his pillow, and there is no other possible way of getting at her. Well! so I thought until some forty-eight hours ago. Now I'll tell you what has occurred. The night before last, about an hour earlier than this, I was going up to bed; I had been sitting by the fire, and crossed over to the bookcase near where you are standing to fetch a bedroom candle. This polished oak floor is very slippery, as I dare say you know; in moving quickly forward, I slid upon it, and, in trying to regain my balance, one of my feet struck that piece of skirting yonder between the fireplace and the farther corner of the room. I was in a good deal of pain, and I am afraid swore a little; when I recovered my tranquillity, I found that I had made a considerable discovery. In striking the skirting board I had touched some concealed spring; the board was standing out nearly at right angles from the wall; in the hollow thus disclosed was a brass plate, with a groove

for the hand, let into a solid oak panel. I applied my hand to the groove, and the panel slid up immediately like a shutter, without noise ; inside it, was a winding staircase in the thickness of the wall, evidently leading to some passage beyond. I had no lamp to prosecute my discovery then, so I closed the panel again, and replaced the skirting board, taking care to observe how the spring acted (which I will show you presently), and deferring any further investigation till the next day. Last night I followed up the adventure. Again uncovering the brass plate and lifting the panel, I descended the stairs, and found myself in a dry sanded passage, partly vaulted with masonry, and partly hewn in the natural rock. After one or two turnings, this pursued a course nearly straight, until it again terminated in another and rather longer flight of stairs. I mounted these, and finding a sliding panel, similar to the one which opens into this room (and of course capable of being lifted in the same way from either side), I gently raised it, and shading the lamp which I carried with me, looked about to reconnoitre. I was in the tower ; in the *inner* room. She was asleep, in bed. Well ! I didn't wake her ; I thought the discovery might possibly be of some use ;—and the last twenty-four hours have shown that I was right.

“ Well now, Clara,” pursued Butler, who had still received no reply to his last communication, “ we can’t be talking all night. I think you see—you can hardly fail of doing so—that we have the game all in our own hands now. I have arranged *everything* with a view to this; simply and literally, there is not even the possibility of risk. There is the underground passage, it is true, and if you were alone, you might perhaps hesitate to venture into such a strange place; but in my company, and with lights, I know you will have too much sense to feel any nervousness about it. In fact, even there we are most fortunate. The passage runs, as I have told you, almost straight the whole way; there is no turning of any kind. In one place, not long after you have descended the staircase leading from this room, there is another passage which opens into it from behind (on the right, as you go towards the tower), apparently running almost parallel to it for some distance. I had not time to follow this; and in coming back, of course, we must take the right hand turning, not the left, which would lead into this passage; I suppose it goes to cellars or something of the sort. But in going to the tower, there is literally no difficulty at all. So now, Clara, the sooner we act the better. You will see in a moment

what is required of you; there must be no indications of violence on the person, remember. But probably there will be no difficulty. With this bright moon no light will be required in the room itself; the panel slides up wholly without noise, and these list slippers" (Butler pointed to a pair similar to some which he had already assumed himself) "will prevent our tread disturbing her, even if awake. As to any sound she might make, we could at once stop that if necessary; but really it would be hardly worth while; the servants are far out of hearing in any case, and Ulrike is stone-deaf, and besides, *THEY ARE ALL WELL DRUGGED. Allons donc*; we shall be back long before midnight."

Mrs. Butler now at length spoke. She had recovered something of the dignity of former years; at times her voice rose into an impassioned tone, but more usually it partook of the deep dejection, now coupled with unfeigned self-abasement, which had latterly been perceptible in her. "Mr. Butler," she cried; "man—devil! The worst punishment I can inflict upon myself is to say that I have deserved to listen to what you have now dared to say to me; oh God! *her* mother. Yes! I see the taunt in your face; I do not shrink from it. If any punishment can atone for my part in this evil deed, may it reach

me now, here, on earth, rather than in another world. But why speak of this to *you*?

“ Mr. Butler, my eyes are now opened to the past; I see myself not probably as I should do, but still sufficiently to loathe and abhor the very name I bear, the very flesh that clothes me; to feel that no human shame, or torture, or reproach is or ever could be one-hundredth part bad enough to avenge *my* share in what has taken place these last two years. But then, at the same time, I see and know *you*. I have lived long years in these last few hours; I have unravelled and ripped up every mesh of that fatal net you have wound round me; and now I see in the clearest daylight, even where I cannot yet trace out all the subtle workings of your villainy, that in each downward step I have taken in the course of guilt and infamy, yours has been the evil guidance which has led me forward, playing on my hard selfish heart—fool that I was, and blind to all love and mercifulness!—as it would on some weak instrument, the tool and passive organ in its hands. But enough of this, to you at least.

“ Mr. Butler, I have come here for two purposes to-night. The first is to say what I have already said; to unsay and undo, if it might be,—oh! if it might be,—all that I have done and spoken at your

bidding during these last unhappy years. I have come to tell you that for ever I renounce the fatal tie which has united us; that I will never more be called by your name, never see you more, never more breathe the same air, or inhabit the same walls with you; that I go forth from hence into the dark night, alone and unattended, seeking only to hide my shame in some cloister, where I may at least learn what outward penitence should be; that I would bear that my hand should be struck from my wrist, and my tongue torn from its roots, and my very soul and being trampled under men's feet, as I now tread under mine this most guilty pledge," (and Mrs. Butler crushed under her foot as she spoke the wedding ring, which she had torn from her finger, and flung forcibly on the ground) "if it might even now undo the unhallowed union between us. This is *one* reason why I have come to seek you to-night. And the *other* is, to unravel to the very bottom the guilty secret at which you hinted this morning; to denounce, to frustrate, to baffle you.

"Yes, Mr. Butler, I have borne your name; I have shared hearth and home, the same board, the same lodging with you. One quarter of an hour, and no more, I give you to make your escape. I quit this accursed room now and for ever; and for

that space, if you quit it with me, you are safe. But linger in the house beyond that time, or linger in this room, of which I now know the fatal secret, one moment after I have left it, and you are a lost man. I go hence to save others; it rests with you to save yourself. Farewell, Mr. Butler. May the Almighty help and forgive you—and *me*."

During her last sentence, Mrs. Butler, whose position throughout the interview had, as we have said, been close to the door, had kept a grasp on the handle. As she concluded, she now turned the latter, and was on the point of passing out; it required only a moment to do so. But a vigilant and keen eye had been upon her movements. By an extraordinary exertion of strength and activity, and with a single bound, as it seemed, like that of the tiger, Butler, although seated at the further end of the apartment now reached the door, just in time to prevent his wife's purpose. The key happened to be inside the room; Butler hastily turned it in the lock, and placing it in his breast pocket, confronted his former confederate with a glare of the eye, which, if it had lost something of its real power from the passion which now dictated it, was perhaps in itself more terrible to witness than in its moments of assumed calmness.

"Oh, you *do*, do you?" Butler at length said, in a voice quivering with intense but suppressed rage; "you *do* go forth to denounce and frustrate and baffle me, Mrs. Butler? But, you see, there are two parties to be consulted about that matter; and, perhaps, about one or two others which we shall have to discuss this evening, my good lady. So you are 'going into some cloister,' are you? What a pity, now, that we did not come out in the virtuous line a little earlier, instead of putting it off till now, when our friends are in danger, and we think we can make better terms for ourselves by betraying them! But come, Clara, now," added Butler, after a minute's silence, with a command of voice and temper which would have seemed almost incredible, "I see that something has occurred to vex and trouble you. I will overlook this little ebullition as far as I am concerned; and you must forget any hasty expressions on my part; and then, do let us sit down together, and talk over this matter sensibly, and see what is best to be done."

Mrs. Butler sat down as requested; she felt she was in Butler's power, and determined to concentrate all her faculties, enfeebled as they were, on the best mode of frustrating the atrocious plan he had proposed. She now bitterly repented her folly in

having sought this last interview, instead of acting on the knowledge she already possessed. Butler, on the other hand, seemed pleased with her compliance. He believed, or affected to believe, that he had made some impression; and, seating himself by her, he endeavoured, by every form of subtle and ingenious persuasion, to procure her concurrence in the crowning act of villainy which he now meditated. Never had his extraordinary knowledge of character and disposition, the rhetoric, the bold avowal and ingenious palliation of the consummate advocate, shone forth with such brilliancy as now. Diverted to a legitimate object, what might not such powers have effected!

But they were unsuccessful with his present hearer. Now that the temporary excitement under which Mrs. Butler had before spoken had passed away, the genuine self-reproach and remorse which her character had exhibited for the first time, resumed their full sway, and made her impervious to every suggestion of the tempter. One subject alone occupied her thoughts fully and intently. At length the moment arrived.

The clock again struck; it was *one*; the intermediate hour had passed by without being heard by either of the two persons who now occupied that

lonely chamber. Butler sprang to his feet. "Idiot!" he cried, "I cannot stop talking all night with you; if I fail through your folly, at least *you* shall be involved in the consequences." As he spoke, Butler strode hastily to the end of the room nearest the fireplace. His wife had divined the movement, and this time she anticipated it. With a quick step, she too gained the side of the room which concealed the mysterious panel, and planted herself firmly in front of it. Butler almost shouted to her in his passion, "Move, woman; move, or —." The sentence was unfinished; Mrs. Butler retained her position. "Never!" she said, unconsciously repeating the words of her dream, "never! if I die for it." Butler's personal strength was great; with one powerful exertion of it, he tore the trembling but still undismayed form before him from its hold, and hurled, rather than forced it, to the further end of the apartment. Mrs. Butler fell on the ground stunned, and bleeding in the head from some piece of the furniture with which she had come in contact. Her husband looked at her for a minute or two. "She'll tell no tales just at present," he muttered; "even if she were to rouse up before it's done, she can't get out, and none of them will hear her to-night, at any rate; a good thing I thought of

that morphine." He then pressed firmly on the spring of the skirting-board, which flew open as before; and, easily lifting the panel, (the groove of which was concealed behind a deeply-carved bead in the wainscoting of the room,) descended the flight of steps, taking with him a hand-lamp from the table, which had been previously trimmed for that purpose. He had proceeded some little distance when a sudden thought seemed to strike him; and, retracing his steps, he drew to the skirting-board, which was constructed so as both to open and shut from the inside. Having carefully adjusted this, Butler next drew down the sliding-panel into its place, thus leaving no trace in the apartment of the mode by which this exit had been effected; and, rapidly traversing the subterraneous passage, proceeded on his destination. While he is thus occupied, our story must again take up the thread of occurrences in more than one quarter, in which it has been for some time interrupted.

CHAP. X.

"What evil and what good alike may chance within thy home,
While far away 'neath other climes thy weary footsteps roam."
HOMER, *Odys.* iii. 497.

IN order to redeem the promise made at the close of our last chapter, it will be necessary in the first place to carry back our story to a period about a couple of months before the eventful day at which it has at present arrived, and also to renew the reader's acquaintance with two persons whom we have been compelled to dismiss from the narrative for a longer period than we could have desired.

It was on a sultry August afternoon that two gentlemen and a lady were seated in the terrace of a small villa in the Alban Hills, overlooking the prairie-like undulations of the Campagna, and commanding, in the distance, a view of the Eternal City itself. Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Akehurst, who formed two of the party, had spent the preceding winter and spring in Rome, and had engaged their present abode as a retreat during the approaching season of the malaria. The other gentleman was

one whom we trust our readers have not forgotten in the interval, Dr. Davis. The worthy incumbent of Cheveleigh had been for some months a widower. Unable, at present, to bear the memories which more than thirty years of married life had woven round the hearth of the little parlour in the Vicarage, he had arranged for a six-months' absence from his duty; and meeting with Frederick Akehurst at Rome, had accepted his invitation to spend a few weeks at the Alban villa. The party on the terrace were gazing, almost in silence, at a scene perhaps more pregnant with thoughts of stirring interest than any other on the face of the globe (excepting indeed the thrilling associations of the Holy Land), when the servant of the house brought in an English letter for Mr. Akehurst. The epistle was of some bulk, and addressed in a stiff legal hand; a glance at the writer's signature apprised Mr. Akehurst that it was from our former acquaintances, Messrs. Neill and Hetherington, whom he at once recollected, by name, as the solicitors of his late brother. As before we give this document *in extenso*:—

“Lincoln's Inn Fields, July 18.

“Dear Sir,—Although we have not the pleasure of your personal acquaintance, our connection with

your late father, and subsequently with your lamented brother, Mr. John Akehurst, appears to justify us in addressing you on a family matter of great importance. Should we be labouring under any mistake in regard to it, we trust you will believe that our interference was dictated by the best intention, and that we should not have trespassed so far had it not been for circumstances of grave suspicion connected with a member of your family, and the very singular accident which has made us acquainted with them. We fear that to make what we have to say at all intelligible, we must first request your attention, briefly as possible, to some points of legal detail.

“ Now, in the first place, we hardly know whether you are aware that your late father made a settlement of the Cheveleigh Estates, dated the — day of —, which (without troubling you with technical phraseology) was to the following effect. Reserving to himself the first life estate, followed by one to your late brother, he then *entailed* the property upon your brother's children, first in the male and then in the female line: failing which issue, the estates were to go, in the words of the settlement, to your brother's ‘right heirs.’ The settlement also contained a direction, into which we need not now go

at length, as to the assumption of the Akehurst name and arms by any one who might marry a female '*tenant in tail*;' and also a provision, which is important to our present purpose, that your brother's widow, should he leave any, should have the entire management and enjoyment of the estate, until some '*tenant in tail*,' male or female, should attain his or her majority, and subject only to the condition of providing a home for the unmarried children. The trustees of this settlement are yourself, jointly with the two members of our firm; but it appears that, as is frequently the case, you have never executed the instrument, and it is therefore quite possible that you may not be aware of its existence.

"We now proceed to some of the facts connected with this settlement. It was a few months after your lamented brother's death, that we received a letter from his widow, requesting to know if the title-deeds of Cheveleigh were in our possession, and begging us, if such were the case, to forward them to her without delay. We felt it inconsistent with our duty, as trustees of the settlement, to comply with this request, and we wrote to Mrs. Akehurst to that effect, adding expressions of our willingness to oblige her in any other manner. To our surprise, we received an answer from her by return of post,

stating her entire ignorance of the instrument to which we alluded, and requesting that a copy might be forwarded to her. This was done, and since that time no correspondence has taken place between us.

“You will observe that Mrs. Akehurst’s continuing in possession (or in the receipt of the rental) of Cheveleigh, which is still the case, is quite consistent with the provision to which we have already adverted, your niece, Miss Lucy Akehurst, who is the only surviving ‘*tenant in tail*’, being still under age. Our Mr. Hetherington, by whom this business has been principally conducted, recollects indeed feeling some surprise at the time as to the capacity in which Mrs. Akehurst, if not aware of the settlement, could have felt herself entitled to continue in the enjoyment of the Cheveleigh Estates; but he states, that in the pressure of other matters, the circumstance escaped his memory; and as no further communication took place with Mrs. Akehurst, and there was nothing to call for an interference in regard to the property, (in fact, our position as trustees was principally of a technical character,) the subject was gradually forgotten.

“It was not until the month of January in the present year, that our attention was again attracted

to the facts connected with the Cheveleigh property. In that month, we were requested to act on behalf of the family of a gentleman of the name of Burrough, recently deceased. Mr. Burrough's affairs were left in some disorder, and it was necessary for us to go minutely through the papers in his possession. Amongst others, we had occasion to peruse a 'release,' as it is called, given to Mr. Burrough on the occasion of his distributing the property of a lady, for whom he had been executor, amongst the parties entitled under her will. These executorship accounts had got into some confusion, and it was necessary to peruse the 'release' carefully, to ascertain how matters exactly stood. One of the parties to this instrument, we now found, was Mrs. Akehurst, your late brother's widow, her husband having been entitled as one of the legatees, although the money was payable in an event which did not occur until about two years after his death. Mrs. Akehurst received this money by virtue of your brother's will, which, although unnecessarily, happened to be fully set out in the 'release,' and by which, it appeared, he left to her the whole of his property, real and personal. This at once recalled to Mr. Hetherington's mind the doubt he had previously felt, and, at the same time, furnished the

solution of it, as it is evident that Mrs. Akehurst, knowing nothing of the settlement, would, under the terms of this will, have believed herself entitled absolutely to Cheveleigh as her own property, instead of her occupation there being merely temporary. In addition to this, however, there was another remarkable circumstance connected with this will of your brother's, which did not escape Mr. Hetherington's notice. You will recollect that by the terms of the settlement, if the entail on your nephews and nieces failed, the estates were to go to your brother's '*right heirs*.' Now, without troubling you with technical details as to this, it will be enough for us to say that, by a singular rule of law, the effect of this was just the same as if the settlement had said, 'If there are no children of John Akehurst for the entail to take effect in, then, in that case, the estates shall belong to John Akehurst himself, whether living or dead.' Now, your brother's will was made long after this settlement; so that you will at once see, that this interest, to which he was entitled upon failure of the entail on his own children, would go to any person to whom he might give it by his will; and this person, as we have seen, was his widow. We were aware of the death of your nephew, Master Charles Akehurst, and that

there was now only one '*tenant in tail*' remaining, Miss Lucy Akehurst, who was still a minor; and Mr. Hetherington recollects noticing it as a curious circumstance, that, taking into account the contingencies of human life, it was possible after all that your brother's widow might, from the operation of the legal instrument we have referred to, (although not, we should imagine, from the intention of the parties,) come into the absolute possession of the Cheveleigh Estates, to which she had for so many months erroneously supposed herself entitled.

"We now come to the circumstances which have led to our addressing you, and also to the above lengthened explanation, and we trust you will consider them of importance enough to justify the course we have adopted. A few weeks since, our managing clerk was on a visit which he annually pays to his family, who reside in a small village in the upper part of Northumberland. He is, we need not say, well known in the locality where he was born and bred, and has frequently been in the habit of assisting some of the poorer people there with legal advice, drawing their wills, &c.; of course gratuitously. In the course of his present visit, a poor woman, the widow of a labourer in humble circumstances brought him a letter she had just received from a son of hers, who, she stated,

was in service with an English family somewhere in Germany, and requested him to read it to her ; she was unable to read writing herself. On perusing this document, which was of a very extraordinary character, and of which we enclose a *verbatim* copy taken by the mother's permission, our clerk's attention was at once arrested, in conjunction with the circumstances to which it referred, by the name of Akehurst. He was aware, of course, of the long connection we have had the honour to maintain with your family, and on his return home felt it his duty to mention what had occurred to Mr. Hetherington, to whom he also showed the copy he had taken. By a perusal of the copy we now send, you will at once see the extreme importance which Mr. Hetherington, knowing, as he now did, the *legal position* of the parties under the Cheveleigh settlement and your brother's will, was led to attach to the facts with which he had thus become acquainted. He at once communicated these to his partner ; and we regret to say, that taking the whole circumstances together, we cannot divest our minds of the suspicion that some foul play, of a character unusually atrocious, is being practised upon your niece, Miss Akehurst.

“ This impression has been much strengthened by inquiries which our cordial respect for our late la-

mented clients, your father and Mr. John Akehurst, induced us to make in reference to the statements of the letter in question, and the expense of which we determined should not deter us from investigating, and if possible, preventing, what appeared to us a scheme of extraordinary villany. We ought to have mentioned before, that our principal cause for suspicion, in connection with the letter, was the character of Mr. Butler, an attorney at W——, whom, you are doubtless aware, your sister married about a year since, and of whom we had some previous knowledge as a most unprincipled and at the same time very clever scoundrel. We deeply regretted this match (of which we only heard very recently) on your sister's account, although of course we had no apprehension of any serious consequences resulting from it; now we regret to say that, impossible as it seems, we can hardly refrain from great apprehension as to the line of conduct into which she may have been betrayed by such a villain. The inquiries we have since made all tend to corroborate this.

Mrs. Akehurst appears, at the time of her second marriage, to have been involved in the most serious pecuniary embarrassments, involving the loss even of liberty. Butler seems to have been constantly with her at this period; there was an execu-

tion in the house the day before she married; the resources of her partial interest in Cheveleigh were wholly exhausted; she had nothing to look to but this reversion, with one life only between it and herself. After the marriage, we find that Butler entirely gave up a flourishing business at W——, and settled down with his wife in the strictest seclusion in a remote corner of Wales; that he then went to Baden-Baden, where your niece was plunged, in a state of mind evidently unfit for it (we believe there had been some engagement to a highly estimable young gentleman, which her mother had broken off), into every kind of gaiety and dissipation; and that this ultimately terminated in a brain fever, leaving her, an English physician on the spot writes, wholly free from mental disorder, but in a state in which it would be very possible that the powers both of mind and body might be overthrown by injudicious treatment. Dr. —— adds, that the whole family suddenly disappeared from Baden-Baden, without it being known where they had gone; and you will see that the foolish fellow, whose letter has furnished the clue to our present suspicions, has unfortunately omitted to affix any address to it, or at least any that is intelligible. At this point, therefore, our information closes; indeed, it is obviously better that any

further inquiry which it may be deemed advisable to prosecute, should be left in your hands, as the nearest relative of the young lady. We should, in fact, have communicated with you before this, had we not been uncertain as to your present residence.

“Trusting sincerely that you will pardon any error we may have committed in overstepping the strict line of professional duty,

“We are, dear sir,

“Faithfully yours,

“NEILL & HETHERINGTON.”

Accompanying the above epistle, as it had promised, was a literal copy of one which the reader has doubtless already surmised to be from our friend Jelps, and which we now transcribe (being of no great length, although the original was scrawled over four pages of letter paper) in its authentic and highly characteristic form. Mr. Jelps's literary productions, indeed, might be considered to labour under some considerable infirmities, not only as regarded the structure of the sentences, the involution of which occasionally reminded us of our school-days in the society of our friend Livy, but also as to their orthography, which had a tendency either to break out into unexpected capitals in the middle of words, or

else (by way of compensation perhaps) to amputate the last syllable or two, and write it in a smaller character above the line, in a manner highly mysterious and perplexing to persons uninstructed in these peculiarities. The letter ran as follows :—

“ The Slosh, May 18.

“ HONoured MAWTher

“ Trusting and pRAying in regard to your rhEUMat^{ism} which I now tak up my pen prinCipall^y in regard thereof as namely to mend or LIKEly to mend, as being your dooTif^{ul} SON and which am very well and sTrong in body at the pres^{ent} time meAning mySelf. As MeaSTH^{er} also, in regard of which is comForT^{able} as being good MEAs^ther and MiSSu^s but takes the pur thing's aFFlic^{tion} much to hart, leastWise that she is not seen mUch about which maks it less suRPriS^{ing} therefore. There is not much sociEty at the Slosh, and the poor thiNg (that's Miss A^{cursed},) her mOans and scrEams is dread^{ful}, which Mr. Butler (that's her sTep-feather loik) tuk out the gIR^{ls} and me when they oCCurr^{ed}, which onst hear^{ing} was enough, being drEdful beyant description, the same bEI^{ng} mad. And her Mawther, that's Missus ACCURST that was, which that it is now Mrs. ButL^{er} by reason of the

change of name in HOLY MatrImony is the cause why, as having onst been vERy rich, as with ouSes and osSes and carridge^{es}, Susan says, which a friEnd of hern in Devunshir wrote as knows them. Not that I think either she is mad, loik, if MEastHer wun't so shur of it, bekos I'll tell you what happen^d. Howlerik, which is the correk pRONunSH^{ation} of the nus, which I'm now beginning, likewIse other pronunSHations, which is difficult, but better than IdLEness, being the rOOt of all evil, to acWire; but as I was of a-saying, Howlerik fetches me up to the tour to mEnd the claPP^{er} thing, which instead of a bEll, she being stone-deaf, which your sOn is the same of his own construXion, as I says as sHouldn't, is there used. Says I, nuJing her, and pointing, 'Howlerik, the door's open.' (For there's a dOr betwixt her and the other.) So says she, 'Dars is nIx;' and she shOWs me how pur thIng was strApped down on the bEd, with a cH^{ain} and cOllar, loik a dog loik, round h^{er} nEck. So I mEnds the clApper, and was jest Hoff, when a spLInt^{er} run up under my nail of my 4 fin^{ger}. I tries with Howlerik to get it out, but couldn't, and I was whimPer^{ing} loik with th' pANe, when pur thIng looks up, and says, 'I think, Jelps, I could get it out for you, I used often to take out spLinters

for Papa at Chivley. Leastwise, Jelps,' she says, with such a blessed sweet smile as I never see on any hUman face, 'if you're not afraid of me.' Well, Mawther, I was mortal feared, I can tell you; but I thought it wasn't maNL' to show it, so I steps up by the bEd; and she puts out her butIful little snO' hand, but so thIn, as if you could see the day-light thro' it; and in harf a minnit she had the splInter out. I felt loik I shouldn't much care to go MAD myS^{er}, if all mad peeple was like her, dEAR la^m.

"But I must now conclude, with dooty and best wishes, from want of TIME and SPACE

"of your affect^{ionate} SON

"AnDrew JELPS.

"P.S.—The Jirmans are a stoopid pEople, and their laNgwij is a stoopid lanGWij; but they've some words noigh the sam as ourn; has, brod, braed; butter, boatter."

We need hardly describe to the reader the sensations with which Frederick Akehurst perused the solicitor's letter and its enclosure. His first thought was a feeling of bitter regret and self-reproach at his prolonged absence from England, which had exposed

Lucy, whom he loved as his own daughter, to a scheme of which Mr. Jelps's letter, coupled with the intimation contained in that of Messrs. Neill and Hetherington, at once showed the atrocity, and he feared even the probability of success. But he felt there was no time to be lost in such speculations. Hastily communicating the contents of the letter to his wife and Dr. Davis, he prepared to start that very night for Baden-Baden. But Mrs. Akehurst, as well as the vicar, insisted on accompanying him; the former declared her intention of starting without luggage or preparation of any kind, if necessary, in order to lend her aid in Lucy's rescue. Ultimately, a vetturino was engaged for that evening, and in a few hours later the whole party were on their road.

They reached Baden-Baden without misadventure; but here the difficulties of their search began. Dr. —, to whom they first applied, could give them no possible clue as to the route Butler had taken; he suggested, however, examining the entries in the diligence office, as the most likely mode of discovering it. This, as Butler had anticipated, threw the inquirers entirely upon a false scent. They at once started for Heidelberg, to which it appeared the places had been booked, and three or

four weeks were lost at that place in prosecuting inquiries, which only left them utterly and hopelessly at fault. At length,—for Butler was nearer the truth than he had supposed in the falsified account he had given his wife of Harcourt's visit,—Dr. Davis suggested sending for a Bow-street runner, if one could be found who was acquainted with the language. Frederick Akehurst was determined to spare no expense, even to his last shilling, in prosecuting his search for Lucy ; and a person such as the case required having been procured from London, the sagacity of this official, aided by Frederick Akehurst's unwearied perseverance and activity in the inquiry, at last succeeded in striking Butler's trail (if we may use the phrase) in the village where he had descended from the stellwagen in consequence of Lucy's illness. From this point the track was pursued with untiring energy and skill, and notwithstanding numerous difficulties, which the adroitness with which Butler had selected his route still managed to throw in the way of his pursuers, they were at length rewarded, on the day at which our story has now arrived, by reaching S——burg. They arrived in the town not long after Harcourt had quitted it, and soon obtained conclusive evidence of the identity of the mysterious place of abode men-

tioned in Mr. Jelps's epistle with the Schloss Herzenfeldt of Butler's present residence.

Frederick Akehurst had been frequently a resident in Germany, as well as in other parts of the continent, and was well acquainted with the language. He had no difficulty, therefore, in adopting the proper steps to procure the assistance of a rude kind of police, to assist him in effecting, if necessary by force, an entrance into the castle, and the delivery of Lucy from her present cruel imprisonment, which, like the solicitors, he felt little doubt was a scheme concocted between Butler and his wife to obtain absolute possession of the property, although he had not yet fathomed the full depths of its nefarious character. The party, accordingly, now mustering, in addition to the two gentlemen and the officer, some ten or eleven strong-bodied men, set forth shortly after noon on their expedition to the castle; Mrs. Frederick Akehurst being left in the principal hotel at S——burg to recruit her strength, which had been much exhausted by the long and rapid journey thither.

He was a wise man who counselled his fellow-creatures to beware of "short cuts." After proceeding a mile or two in the direction of Schloss Herzenfeldt, the main valley, which Harcourt

had pursued at an earlier hour on the same morning, made a considerable detour. Observing this, and eager to reach the object of his search, Mr. Akehurst propounded some inquiries as to whether there were no available footpath by which it would be possible to cut off the angle formed by the junction of the glen in which the Schloss lay with the main valley. A guide soon volunteered, a young man from the neighbourhood, who professed an entire acquaintance with the whole district. Following this pioneer of an evil destiny, Mr. Akehurst and his party struck up a sinuous footway which ascended from the valley, apparently in the direction of the Schloss, and pressed vigorously on their route.

It is hardly necessary to add, that before a couple of hours had elapsed they were entangled, hopelessly as it seemed, in the mazes and wilds of the Black Forest; certainly, it was not due to the skill or experience of any of those who composed the party, least of all to that of their unhappy guide, that they eventually arrived at the gates of the Schloss about half-past one in the night or rather morning; being, as the reader may possibly recollect, some little time after Mr. Butler had started on his nocturnal expedition. The state of circumstances which they found existing there will be more fitly detailed hereafter.

Meanwhile, our narrative must indispensably revert to a personage whom we have somewhat uncere-
moniously discarded from it during the last few
chapters, being in fact our hero, Edgar Harcourt,
Esq.; although possibly the statement of his pro-
ceedings in the interim may more fitly commence
with a fresh chapter.

CHAP. XI.

IPHIG.

"And what the name thy sire impressed
Upon his new-born son?"

ORESTES.

"Alas! the fittest and the best
Had been, 'Thou hapless one!'"

EURIPID. *Iphigen. in Taur.* 499.

It was with a stunned and bewildered feeling, like one who is staggering under some unexpected and severe blow, that Harcourt retraced his steps along the path leading to the castle from which he had been so adroitly ejected. On reaching the copse on the brow of the hill, through which, as has been already mentioned, the footpath to the castle ran for some distance, he found it impossible to keep up the control over his feelings which he had maintained while still in sight of the building; and retiring some little distance into the copse, so as to be screened from the observation of any casual passenger, he flung himself on the ground in a passionate burst of grief, and wept with that bitter and intense agony which, when it occurs

in the stronger sex, whose emotions are under more habitual restraint, is almost terrible to witness in its abandonment and wild despair. More than one hour had passed from the time of his leaving the castle, before Harcourt could in any way moderate the anguish of the feelings which the intelligence so artfully conveyed to him by Butler had awakened, or collect his thoughts sufficiently to allow of his even permitting the substance of what had passed at the recent interview to shape itself in any definite form before his mind, still less to arrange any course of action for the future. Whirling incessantly through his thoughts, the cruel truth, if truth it were, thus unexpectedly disclosed to him, — the confirmation of the fears and anxieties of the last twelve months, in a form which appeared even worse than that of Lucy's death itself, — filled him alternately with the most poignant grief, and with a horror and dismay which nothing else on earth could have produced. The reflection was intolerable; that one whom the poet-dream of his young love had placed before itself as the very personation of all that was gentle and lovely in woman should now be exposed to a doom so horrible; actually, as he had heard, flying, a raving maniac, with streaming hair and disordered dress, through the streets and

thoroughfares of a crowded town! Even when at length the disjointed images which at first crowded on the young man's sight began to assume a more coherent form, it was only to fill the mind with fresh horror and uncertainty. The disorder was not a new thing, then; it had been observed in her from childhood. What hope, what possibility even, was there of its ever quitting her? Must it not develope itself with increased violence, until at last the fair gentle form, the eye, the voice, which he had loved as his own soul, should become those of some moping idiot, perhaps of a fierce and desperate lunatic, secluded as a pitiable spectacle from men's view, and carried, after a dark night of existence, to some obscure and remote grave? Perhaps, too (and the bare thought was agony), the event had already taken place; the confinement he had pictured, the hopeless desolation of life and reason, had even now commenced. And Harcourt now recollected that Butler had not mentioned, and that in his own confusion at the unexpected communication made by the latter he had omitted to inquire, where Lucy actually was. The appearance of the spaniel, indeed, and the retired situation of the Schloss, made it probable that she was there with her mother and step-father. But Harcourt could not feel sure of

this. It was quite possible that Lucy, after the attack which Butler had mentioned, might have been placed in some asylum, either on the continent or in England, and that her mother, under the influence of the morbid feeling which Butler had attributed to her, might have settled in this secluded locality, apart from the scrutiny of those who were acquainted with the causes of the sorrow she had for so many years experienced; while the dog might have accidentally accompanied her, or perhaps been kept, notwithstanding her grief, as a memento of Lucy's happier days from which she found it impossible to part.

The more Harcourt reflected, however, the less credit he felt disposed to attach to his latter supposition, and the less doubt he felt that Lucy, whatever her state of mind might be, was at present actually within the walls of the castle, which from the first had appeared to exercise such an unaccountable fascination upon our hero's mind. At any rate, he was determined not to quit the spot without ascertaining distinctly whether this were the case; and, in the event of his conclusions being wrong, discovering where Lucy had been placed, that at least he might have the satisfaction of connecting with her some associations of a more definite character

than he had been able to do during the suspense and uncertainty of the last few months, as well as of being near, watching over, perhaps seeing her. For Harcourt felt that, whatever her present state might be, his love could bear even *this* test; the clouded intellect, the disfigured frame, the worst and most pitiable forms of mental disorder, could not for one instant change the matchless heart he had once known, and which, alike in its weakness and in its strength, garnished with the fair exterior of its former occupation, or concealed and for the time buried under its ruins, *must* still ever be one and the same; above all, ever unchangeably one in every fibre of its being with his own. The dark prison-house of the maniac could no more destroy *this* than, Harcourt well knew, the grave itself would have done.

When, however, our hero (the violence of whose first grief had been somewhat tranquillised by the course of reflection we have briefly described) came to reflect on the best mode of carrying into execution the plan he had now formed, he could not but perceive that the subject was attended with considerable difficulties. It must be remembered that Harcourt had at present absolutely no clue whatever to Butler's character or designs; nothing could be

more natural or plausible than the conduct of the latter throughout the whole of their recent interview ; and the evident distress of the family, as well as Butler's courteous expressions towards himself, made Harcourt extremely unwilling to trespass again upon their privacy. The only alternative was to endeavour to procure the information he required from some other members of the household ; but his nature instinctively shrunk from this ; in addition to the gossip and tittle-tattle which such a proceeding would occasion in the servants' hall, it wore an underhand appearance towards Butler, who might fairly, he thought, apply to it a still stronger term than he had used in reference to his previous visit. Still, no other course seemed open ; and Harcourt, with some reluctance, had made up his mind to adopt it, and was considering the best mode of shaping his inquiries, when his attention was again aroused by a movement in the underwood close to his own place of retreat.

This time it was a human intruder that appeared ; a moment's scrutiny showed Harcourt that it was his *protégé* Philip Bright. Insensibly, during the long course of reflection in which our hero had indulged, wholly forgetful of the lapse of time (as well as of the fact that he had tasted no food since an

early breakfast the same morning), the sun had declined in the sky, and in half an hour more would have entirely set. Philip hastened to excuse his arrival on the spot; he had become uneasy, he said, in consequence of the lateness of the hour, which was far beyond that at which Mr. Harcourt had said he would return for the horse; he was fearful that some accident might have occurred. At any rate, even if Mr. Harcourt had only remained fishing, he thought he might be of use in carrying the basket; and as the farm people had promised to take care of the horse, he had come on, ascertaining the course he was to follow by inquiring at a cottage near the point where the glen in which the Schloss was situated entered the lower valley; after this, there was only one path. He had found the rod and fishing basket under a tree at the foot of the castle, and had brought them on with him; some footprints had guided him to the spot where Mr. Harcourt now was; the latter would pardon him, he hoped, if he had done wrong.

Philip might not have spoken at such length, had it not been that he felt that Harcourt, instead of replying, was regarding him with a steady, searching look, which the lad feared might be one of displeasure. In reality, however, Harcourt was occu-

pied with far different thoughts. He had at once perceived the advantage he might derive from the intelligence, activity, and ready wit which he had more than once observed in his *protégé*, in prosecuting the inquiries he now meditated; at the same time, he naturally felt some embarrassment, and, perhaps (for Harcourt was keenly sensible to ridicule), some apprehension of placing himself in a ludicrous position, in communicating the circumstances of the case to one so much his junior, and in an inferior station. Some time accordingly elapsed before he spoke to Philip, during which he was framing his instructions so as to obtain the full information he wanted, without at the same time admitting the lad wholly into his confidence. At this moment, however, a ray of the fading sunlight, which fell upon the inquiring and somewhat anxious face of his companion, again recalled to Harcourt's memory (but with far greater strength than ever before) the singular resemblance of which he had already spoken in his letter to Mrs. Gresford, and which had frequently since recurred to him, as he daily noticed in his *protégé* more and more proofs of a delicacy and refinement of mind and character much above his condition.

Forcibly struck with the inexplicable likeness

which he now seemed clearly to trace in the lad's features, and agitated by the occurrences of the morning, Harcourt no longer hesitated. Something at the same time impelled him to make a more full disclosure of the circumstances than he would have thought prudent perhaps on more mature reflection; and in a few brief words he informed Philip of the attachment he had formed to Miss Akehurst, of the mode in which it had been broken off, and of the singular accident which, after so entirely losing sight of her for more than a twelvemonth, had at length brought him to the spot where, if she were not resident herself, it was at least probable that he might learn some tidings of her. He then, in a voice trembling with intense agitation, stated shortly the particulars of his interview with Butler, and explained to Philip the service which he believed the latter would be able to render him in procuring some information as to the young lady's present abode.

If Harcourt had been surprised before at Philip's unexpected appearance in the wood, he was still more astonished now by observing the extraordinary effect which his communication seemed to have upon the lad. At the first mention of Miss Akehurst's name, and the circumstances of Harcourt's brief en-

gagement to her, Philip's face betrayed an emotion quite beyond what anything in the mere narration could have inspired; he made a hasty gesture, and seemed about to speak, but refrained, apparently by a strong effort of self-control. As Harcourt proceeded with his story, the workings of his companion's face, evidently suppressing some powerful sentiment, became more and more visible. At length, when Butler's name was mentioned, and the statements which he had made in reference to Lucy's supposed loss of reason, Philip's interest became overpowering; and although he still retained sufficient command over himself to hear Harcourt to the end, it was only by the exertion of a force under which his whole frame seemed to quiver like a leaf in the wind. When Harcourt ceased, the lad paused for a moment, and then asked abruptly,

"Mr. Harcourt, is it a great sin to break a vow?"

Harcourt looked at his companion with some surprise. "I am no divine, Philip," he said; "if you wish particularly to know, I will endeavour to give you an answer; but really I cannot conceive why you should ask such a question at this moment."

"Indeed, Mr. Harcourt, indeed I have a reason for it," answered the lad, hurriedly, with an appearance of extreme agitation; "I assure you I have.

Only tell me if you think we may ever break a vow that has once been made?"

"Well, Philip," Harcourt replied, after a moment's thought, "I should say, although I am no casuist, that there are cases where it may be done. Clearly, an unlawful vow may, and ought to be broken. But then, besides this (if your question applies to your own case), I should think it very possible that you are under some delusion. A vow is a definite *religious* act; a *promise*. In its proper use, it means a promise made to the Almighty in regard to something indifferent; something which we were at liberty to do, or not to do; but which, having promised, we become, by virtue of the promise (assuming it to be lawful), bound and obliged to do. But then this differs entirely from many things which people commonly call vows, but which are mere *intentions*; as, for instance, the intention of applying something to a religious purpose, which has never assumed the form of a solemn promise, and may, therefore, be altered if it is thought desirable. And of course, it differs still more from such intentions or resolutions as we may form about matters unconnected with religion, which yet are often called vows: these latter, however decidedly formed in our own minds, we are at liberty to alter and change

without the smallest scruple. And now, Philip, I do hope you have no more questions in theology."

"Mr. Harcourt," answered his companion, rather more calmly than before, but still with a tremulous eagerness in his voice and manner, "you have relieved me greatly. I can now tell you something which is a great secret, and which I had believed I had made a vow never to tell; but I now see that, as you say, it was only a resolution. Mr. Harcourt, you see before you a most unhappy wretch; one who is unworthy to speak to you, or to breathe the same air with one so good as you are—a *fratricide*!"

Harcourt started with astonishment and dismay. "What *can* you mean, Philip?" he cried at last.

"It is indeed too true, sir," said Philip, in a tone of deep dejection; "my only excuse, if there can be any for me, is that it was not intentional; that it was an accident, or rather the result of my own evil temper; but not wilful or deliberate. And now, Mr. Harcourt, let me tell you, in as few words as I can, who I really am. You, doubtless, heard from Mr. Evans that the name by which I now go is not my real name; he told me that he should communicate as much of my story as this to you, but no more: he had promised me to do so. But even he did not

know the whole ; I was prevented from telling it to him, partly by thinking of the horror he would feel for me if he knew it ; and still more by believing, as I did till you set me right, that I had made a vow not to do so to any one. But I must not occupy your time with this. As far then as Mr. Evans knew, my real name was Philip Graves ; you, and one other person in the world, will henceforth know it to have been Walter—Walter *Akehurst*. I am Miss Akehurst's younger brother ; younger than herself, but a year or two older than one who died—than Charles." Philip pronounced the last name in a tone of intense mournfulness ; his utterance seemed almost choked. Soon, however, he resumed :

" And now, Mr. Harcourt, let me tell you the dreadful crime of which I was the involuntary cause. At Cheveleigh, where probably you know Miss Akehurst formerly lived, there was an old labourer of the name of Sunningly ; he was an extremely respectable man, and lived in a cottage in the village near the church. I have always, until the last year or two, passed for his grandson. He had a daughter, who married, in a village at some distance, a person of the name of Graves ; they had two children, one a daughter, Letty, to whom Miss Akehurst was always extremely kind, and who died, I believe,

through some violence of this man Butler, about two years and a half ago; the other was supposed to be myself. I was educated, as well as Letty (whom I could not have loved more if she had been my sister, as I always thought she was), at a good school in the village where Graves, my supposed father, lived; afterwards I went to work at a large farmer's there, and got good wages for a lad. When I was about thirteen, my father and mother (that is, Graves and his wife, you know, Sunningly's daughter), both died. Letty then went to live with her grandfather, the old labourer at Cheveleigh. Here Letty——"

The speaker was interrupted by Harcourt's voice. "I will not put you out again, Philip; but I have been thinking over what you have been saying. I now recollect that Miss Akehurst mentioned that she had a brother between herself and Charles, but I have always understood that he died in infancy."

"So it was always thought," answered Philip: — "would that he had so died. But I will explain this presently. Meanwhile, I will go on with my story. I was going to say that at my grandfather's, that is, you know, old Sunningly's, Letty fell ill; she was never strong, and she now went into a consumption; after a few months she died. I have

always understood, as I said, that her death was hastened, if not actually brought on, by some brutal treatment of this man whom you have just mentioned, this Mr. Butler. The farm where I worked was in a village at some distance; it was nearly nine miles off; but I came over to the funeral, and had a long talk with grandfather and his wife, who was still alive, before it. It was then first that I heard the manner of Letty's death; grandfather did not say much, but his wife told me all; and I found that the family up at the Court (that's the seat of the Akehursts) were the real cause of all. They had been hard upon the poor people since Mr. Akehurst's death, and the Sunninglys were to be turned out of house and home. After the funeral, I set out to walk back to my own parish. I went by the fields, brooding heavily over what I had heard; and when I came to a footbridge over the stream (that is a stream which runs down from Cheveleigh Park), I stopped a long time leaning over the rail, and thinking of the haughtiness and pride of these Akehursts, — I little knew that I was one myself, — and the way they ground down the poor people. Just then Charles Akehurst, whom I knew by sight, came along the path, switching his cane. He ordered me to get out of his way, and

when I refused, struck me. I was far the stronger ; I collared him and flung him to one side ; he struck against the other rail of the bridge, which broke, and he fell into the stream. The water was then very high ; it had been raining hard all the morning of Letty's funeral. I plunged in, and managed to land him on the bank, although it was hard work ; but he seemed quite drowned. I tried, oh ! for half an hour I should think, and could get no life into him. Some one was coming down through the wood then, on to the path ; I thought I should be taken up for a murderer, and I fled away up a hollow road between the hills. For three days I lived in the woods thereabouts ; I got some beech nuts and other nuts, and slept at night in the hollow of a large tree I had found. But at last I got hungry ; I must have food. Old Sunningly was leaving the place, as I have said ; and besides, I had no heart to go back to him or to my work. So I went over to nurse's, old Sarah ; we always called her nurse, because she reared my mother (that is, Graves's wife) when she was a baby, and she always took care of Letty and myself whenever we were ill. Well, I was hungry and weak with being out in the fields all those three days, and when she asked me about it, I told her the whole story. I did not

tell her at first who the young gentleman was that I struck; but at last I said, 'It was Master Charles Akehurst, I believe, nurse.' Oh! Mr. Harcourt, if you could have seen the terrible start she made, shutting me out from her sight, as it were, with her hands before her eyes, and the moan which she gave afterwards! She said it twice, 'Oh! God! his brother, his own brother!'

"You may be sure, Mr. Harcourt, I asked her what she meant by those words. She would not tell me for a long time; but I am passionate, I fear, and I was strong, much stronger than she was; and there was something about me that made her tell me. What she said was this: 'Philip,' said she, 'we are both of us most wretched. You have sinned without knowing it; and I have lived all these years in a continued sin, without having the courage to own it. Philip, you are Charles Akehurst's elder brother. Your mother never nursed her own children; Harriet' (that is Mrs. Graves, Mr. Harcourt) 'had a son born just before yourself, and, as she was strong and hearty (and indeed there was no one else to do it), she agreed to take Mrs. Akehurst's child to nurse with her own. She would not do it for money, but for love, she told me, of the poor helpless thing which its own mother cast off

(that was yourself, Philip dear); and she would not leave her own husband at home, so, as I have said, you were taken to be nursed at her cottage. Well, she had an unked time with you both; but I took her baby between whiles, and we had many a laugh together, for the two children were so much alike that I always told her (in joke like) that I should change them, and then hers would have all the beautiful house and lands of Cheveleigh; for, of course, the sons come before the daughters, although Miss Lucy is so much older. Well' (I am telling you what nurse said, Mr. Harcourt), 'one day I had Harriet's baby for the whole day; it wasn't well; some doctor's stuff had come for it, which was to be given every two hours. I had been washing in the out-house, and forgot the time; when I came in, I thought of it; there was a bottle with a label on the dresser, which I gave the child, and went away again washing. Oh! Philip dear, when I came back, the child was stark dead. I looked at the bottle; it was some other medicine, something for my old man here, I don't know what. Then I sat down and had a long think. Harriet's cottage and mine were close together; she was out I knew, would not be home for some hours. Harriet was my own, my very own child, my own nursling; how could I bear

to tell her this? If she had once looked at me, dear gentle lamb that she was, it would have killed me. Then I thought of the likeness of the two children; what was Mrs. Akehurst to me? a proud, hard woman, that cared so little for her own flesh and blood she would not even let them hang at her own breasts!

“ ‘I know not how the thought came, but it was done, and Harriet came back before I had time to alter it if I wished to do so; — *the two children were changed*. There was a crowner’s quest, but they suspected nothing, and it never came out what had happened, nor did Harriet seem to think it herself. And so the thing went on. Harriet’s child was buried in the grand family vault in the old church; and you, Philip, are at this moment the rightful heir of the house and lands of Cheveleigh. But I am forgetting what the real, terrible truth is. Oh! my God, I have sinned, I have sinned! Often have I longed to confess all, especially when Harriet and Graves both died; but I never dared to face that proud woman’s reproach, and now *this* is the end of it.’

“ Mr. Harcourt, I fled from the cottage. She ran to the door, and called after me, but I would not hear. And then I made a vow (although I see now

it was not a vow really—it was a sort of settled purpose in my own heart) that I would never breathe to any living soul my real name and lineage. The thought of inheriting the wealth to which, by old Sarah's account, I now saw I was entitled, seemed horrible to me, with my brother's blood upon my hands, and I determined never to do so. I was now perfectly my own master (for Sunningly and his wife had removed to some village at a distance), and I determined to fly as far as possible from the scene of my unhappy act. I decided to go to London, and travelled there on foot, getting a cast of work and a night's lodging sometimes, at others sleeping out under the open sky, and avoiding as much as I could the main roads. When I reached London, and was forced to mingle with the crowds in its streets, it seemed to me as if my secret could hardly be kept any longer. Almost every other face that I met was one which I fancied I had known near home, and I expected every minute that they would stop me, and charge me with the murder; and how was I to prove my innocence?

“By degrees, however, I got accustomed to the noise and bustle, and found that I was more safe in such a confused throng of people, than if I had been in a country place. I now for several months con-

trived to get employment in one of the docks, for I have always been very strong, much more so than you would believe from my height and size. It was poor living and hard work, but I did not mind this; the terrible secret I bore about with me all day long made me indifferent to everything else. At last, in a coffee-house where I used to get breakfast before my work began, I met accidentally with an old West of England newspaper, which I suppose some one had left there going on board ship. I took up the paper, and read it with some interest, for it mentioned several places and persons whom I knew down home. Just then the dock-bell rang for the men, and I was about to throw down the sheet and hurry off to work, when in one corner, in large letters, I saw something about Cheveleigh. It was a long paragraph, full of the names of visitors who, it said, had arrived there for the sporting season (it was just September then), but there was a sentence at the end which caught my eye immediately; it said that they were glad to understand that Mr. Charles Akehurst, the presumptive heir of this noble property, had sufficiently recovered from his late accident to be able to join the shooting party on the First. I almost shouted with joy, and within an hour from that time I had again started off to walk home, for

I could not bear that huge desolate city (although I dare say there are kind hearts too in some of its dingy streets), and besides, I wanted to make sure that the newspaper was right, and that Charles was indeed alive. For days and days I had no other thought than him; it seemed, if it were true, such intense joy to feel that my hands were clear of my brother's blood; but afterwards, I will confess to you, Mr. Harcourt, the thought crossed me at times, especially when I felt tired and footsore, and lived upon poor fare, and little enough of that, I will confess to you that I could not help thinking of the beautiful house and lands which were my own by right; and I bitterly repented the rash vow I had made; for I still felt bound by this, although it was made under a mistake as to what had really occurred.

“ At last I came near my old home; I did not stop there, however, but went on straight to Cheveleigh Court, crossing the same bridge where I had had the quarrel with Charles, but with a far lighter heart now than when I last left it. There was plenty of work going on at the time, and I easily got taken in at the Home Farm, as they call it, which is close to the Court; I thought this would be the best way of hearing about Charles's recovery. I could not find any opportunity of asking particularly until the fol-

lowing day, but then I contrived some errand to the Court. None of the servants or people thereabout knew me, as the village where I was brought up was some miles from Cheveleigh. Charles I knew by sight, for I had seen him once riding there with his father; but I did not know my sister, that is Miss Lucy Akehurst, at all.

“ Well, Mr. Harcourt, as I was saying, I got in among the servants at the Court, and then at last I asked, as indifferently as I could, how the young gentleman was. It was a good-natured, honest-looking girl I spoke to, and she shook her head very sorrowfully. ‘ If it be Muster Charles you mean,’ she said, ‘ it be all wrong; hé has never spoken after he was suddenly took so much worse again yesterday, and the doctor says now there be no hope.’ Oh! Mr. Harcourt, you do not know, you cannot know, what a cruel blow this was to me; all the worse, after the light feelings I had had in coming back from London again, after I read that sentence in the paper. My legs felt like lead under me. Suddenly, however, I recollected there might be some chance for me; so I asked the girl whether it was supposed that this attack had anything to do with the accident Master Charles had had some months before. ‘ Oh, sure,’ answered the girl, ‘ the doctor

said at the time that it wouldn't have signified so much his falling into the water, but, said he, it's evident the young gentleman struck his head against the bridge or somewhere in falling; and then he showed them the place above the temple where there was the mark of a bad blow. And, you see, Master Charles, although he's got about like all this time, never seemed quite himself; and when he was took yesterday, the doctor said it was now quite evident that there had been more mischief done which wasn't found out, and that it was that first blow which did it all.'

"I could not bear to hear more, but constantly after this, during the few days he lived, I managed to come to the house, and find out how Charles was; but it was always the same; he had never spoken; it was quite impossible he should recover. At last one night (it was the night he died) I could bear it no longer; my heart yearned over my brother, and I determined that I would try to see him once more. I had found out where his bedroom was, which was on the first floor, not very high above the ground; there was a large creeping shrub of some kind that grew up under the window, and as they were bright moonlight nights then, I knew that if I waited till every one was in bed I should be able to see him, as

he lay there. Quite late at night, accordingly, I climbed up by the creeper, and raising my head above the sill, looked into the room. It was a large old-fashioned room, and my sight did not at first get accustomed to the objects; but at last I saw Charles lying on a small bed in one corner; I could see even by that light how pale and ill he looked, and my heart seemed to weep blood at the thought that I, his own brother, was the cause of this. By the side of his bed there was a young lady, whom I at once guessed to be Miss Lucy; her eyes were bent on the ground, as if in deep sorrow. Probably I made some noise, or did something else which attracted her attention, for she raised her face, and I saw directly by the frightened look she gave to the window that she had seen me there. I at once slid down by the creeper again, and the same night, as I have said, Charles died.

“ I waited for the funeral, and then determined at once and for ever to quit that neighbourhood. I had not the fear of being discovered now as I had before, for I found, from one or two things which the servants had said, that Charles had never told any one of the real cause of the accident; they all supposed the handrail of the bridge had given way with him of itself. Oh! Mr. Harcourt, I then knew what a

generous, noble heart my brother must have had ; it made me abhor myself for my own act twice as much. But at the same time this enabled me to consider more calmly what plan I had best follow ; and at last I decided on going to that place in Wales, where I first met you. What made me think of this was, that one of the maids of Cheveleigh came from that part, where I learnt from her the Akehursts had some property (that was Plas Newydd, Mr. Harcourt). I thought somehow I should like the place, so I determined to settle there ; it seemed too, although I found the Akehursts never came there, that the fact of the place belonging to them would still keep up some kind of connection between me and the home which I must now never know or enter, the only one I had on earth. It was not that I now wanted the wealth and honour which I suppose I should have been entitled to claim ; I should have hated these now. What I did long for, I can hardly tell you *how* deeply and earnestly, was for something to love ; something round which my heart might cling and attach itself once more. I hardly know why, but I did not seem to have this sort of feeling towards my mother—my real mother that is, Mrs. Akehurst ; perhaps it was from what I had heard of her from the Sunninglys, and now from

the servants at Cheveleigh ; they all spoke of her as a hard, cold person, whom nobody much loved or respected. It was Lucy that I longed so inexpressibly to know. I felt that if I could once have thrown my arms round her and called her my sister, I could have borne the burden of my life better. I knew, indeed, that this must not be, and, till to-day, nothing could have induced me to make myself known to her ; but still, I constantly hung about the house, when I could do so without suspicion, in the hope that I might be able to see her and hear her voice ; and two or three times I did so, although she never saw me excepting that once at the window.

“But I am tiring you, Mr. Harcourt, with this long story. I have almost done now, however. The week after the funeral, I started off walking for Llanfihangel, as I had proposed. It was getting late in the year, and for the last week or two before I reached the village, I was in great distress, and almost starving. It was then that Mr. Evans found me ; he was generous and compassionate, and this led me to confide to him as much of my story as I could, without breaking what I then believed to be my vow ; that is to say, I told him the whole, with the exception of what old Sarah told me about the children being changed, and of my own feelings in

regard to Charles. I was greatly surprised, and at first vexed, when in the course of a few weeks Mrs. Akehurst (that is my mother) and Lucy came to settle at Plas Newydd. However, I decided on remaining there, and afterwards was glad I had done so, as it seemed something more like home having them there. I still kept out of Lucy's sight, although I frequently saw her; at Mr. Evans's funeral I was almost afraid she had seen my face, although I was careful to hide it from her as much as possible. And now, Mr. Harcourt, you know my whole story. It is so strange in many parts that if I were to gain anything by it I could not expect you to give credit to it; but alas, instead of being of any advantage to me, it can only, I fear, lead to your looking upon me with the same horror which I have always done on myself. My reason for being so anxious that you should hear it was partly that I thought you would have more confidence in speaking to me if you knew my real relationship to Lucy, and partly on Lucy's own account. In fact, if you had not explained to me so kindly about my supposed vow, I hardly know how I should have borne it."

Harcourt grasped his young companion's hand warmly. "Philip!" he said, "I thoroughly believe every word you have said; it bears the stamp of

truth; and it is a singular corroboration of it, that for some time past I have been struck with a remarkable likeness between you and Miss Akehurst, which of course I concluded must be mere fancy on my part. Nor need you at all fear my feeling the horror you speak of; I hope hereafter Philip (or Walter I ought perhaps to call you now) — ”

“ No, Mr. Harcourt,” interrupted his listener; “ Philip still, and always, if you please. I cannot bear the thoughts suggested by the other name.”

“ Well, Philip then,” continued Harcourt, “ if you wish it. I was going on to say, that I hope hereafter to be able to show you that your feelings are exaggerated upon this point, as they were in regard to your supposed vow. But at present I must speak about Miss Akehurst. I hardly understood what you said just now; I mean, why should this terrible malady which has attacked her have made you so anxious to communicate to me what you have now done?”

“ I will tell you,” answered Philip. “ Mr. Harcourt, I feel, in consequence of what I have now heard from you, that I must now act for my sister’s protection in conjunction with yourself; and of course to do this, it was indispensable that you should know all. Mr. Harcourt, I much fear there is some deep villany going on. How far Lucy may be really in

the state of mind that man Butler represented, I cannot tell; but if she is, I cannot help believing that he has driven her into it."

Harcourt looked at his companion with a countenance of blank dismay. Philip continued; "You see, Mr. Harcourt, until you mentioned it just now, I was wholly ignorant of my mother (I mean of course Mrs. Akehurst) having married this man Butler. Probably you know nothing of him?"

"Nothing whatever," Harcourt answered, "except what I have seen to-day; I had previously received a letter from him, returning one of mine to Lucy about a year ago. There was something in his look and manner I did not particularly like, and I fancied he was very anxious to get me out of the castle; but he stated a plausible reason for it, and otherwise seemed courteous, and even kind."

"He is an utter villain," replied Philip; "a low-born, base-minded villain; very clever, I believe, but a man capable of any amount of wickedness. My mother's marriage to him is most incomprehensible; I have been filled with astonishment ever since you mentioned it. Her position at Cheveleigh was of course one of the first in the county; while he was a common attorney at W——, a large market-town near Cheveleigh. I had often heard of him in the

village where I worked ; I have heard of his doing the most atrocious things, ten times worse than what I told you he did to old Sunningly. The instant you spoke of his marriage to my mother something seemed to thrill through me ; I felt that he had got Lucy into his power (especially if, as I do not doubt, she is really shut up in this strange place, with not a creature near to help her), and that he was quite scoundrel enough to go any length with her. Mr. Harcourt, I quite shudder to think what may be Lucy's fate if we do not interfere ; perhaps it is too late already."

"But why?" asked Harcourt ; "what possible motive could he have ? besides, her mother would be able to protect her."

"I hardly know that," answered Philip ; "he may have talked her over in some way. As I have already told you (for I *must* speak plainly now), from all I have heard, I fear my mother is a selfish and heartless, and at the same time I imagine, a weak woman ; if she once put herself, as I fear from this wretched marriage she has done, in Butler's power, it is impossible to say how far he might lead her astray ; and I am sorry to say that some facts with which I became acquainted in a singular way, show me there is abundance of *motive* for both of them.

I will tell you what occurred. I have already mentioned that before my finally leaving Cheveleigh, I could not forbear lingering about the house, when I thought it would not be observed, in order to gain a sight of Lucy, even to see her figure in passing, or hear her voice. I felt towards her just as I have read of lovers doing towards those to whom they are attached." (In spite of the excitement under which he was labouring, Philip coloured as he spoke, for he felt he had committed rather a solecism in the present company; however, he quickly resumed.) "Well, it was the day after poor Charles Akehurst's funeral; I was utterly sad at heart myself, and longed to know how my sister bore her own trouble. I had heard one of the servants say that she was going out for a drive in the forenoon, and about the time they had named, I went round to a part of the house which was little frequented, and out of sight of the front door, in hopes that I might catch a glimpse of her as she drove down the carriage-road, which made a sharp curve near the place where I stood. There was an open window near where I had placed myself, and two people were talking within; one of them I knew by the voice to be my mother. Lucy was some time in coming down, and

I felt at first some scruple as to remaining where I was, lest I should unintentionally be guilty of eaves-dropping; but I soon found they were talking about some law business of which at first I could not understand a word, so I decided on remaining. I saw Lucy pass and then went away; as I was leaving the ground I turned to have a last look at the room where Charles died, and saw Mr. Butler (whom I had before seen in our village) come out of the front door. When I went to bed at night I was rather surprised to find that several of the sentences I had heard in the morning, although I hardly attached any meaning to them, hung on my mind; I could not help somehow thinking about them, and I have often done so. There was one thing in particular Butler (for I have no doubt it was he) said, just before Lucy came, which I recollected almost in the exact words; in fact, this was easy enough to understand; it was what they were saying before, about an 'entail,' I think Mr. Butler called it, of Cheveleigh, and several other law-terms and phrases which seemed to me so unintelligible. The words I recollect so well were these (it was Mr. Butler who was speaking, as I have said): 'So, Madam, you see the only event under which your

interest would become available would be if anything should happen to Miss Akehurst before she attains twenty-one; and this, thank God,'—I was particularly struck with such a man as he was saying *that*; I think it is what made me remember the whole,—‘this is wholly unlikely to occur.’ Then some more followed which I could not understand; as far as I recollect, it was about a ‘contingent estate’ (if there is such a phrase), but I cannot at all recall the exact words. At last, just before Lucy’s carriage drove round the corner, there was a sentence I again remember entire, because it seemed to me an odd thing to say to my mother, and Butler said it in a very marked tone; the words were: ‘Such an interest as this, where there is only one life standing between you and the present enjoyment of the estates.’ The carriage then came in sight, and I went away immediately afterwards. I am onfident as to what I have told you being the exact words; I have thought about them sometimes, but they never seemed of any particular consequence until to-day. Now, coupled with everything else, they really make me fear, although it would hardly have seemed possible otherwise, that there is some dreadful plot in hand against Lucy. What do you think Mr. Harcourt?”

Harcourt had listened to his companion's narrative with breathless attention; he now again grasped Philip's hand. "Your information is invaluable," he said, "it throws a new light upon the whole transaction; we must act instantly. Do you think you could get admission into the castle in any way, without Butler's knowledge, and find out whether Lucy is there, and how things stand generally?"

"I have little doubt of it," said Philip, "if you will let me take this fish-basket. I will pretend that I have just caught the fish, and offer them for sale. My only difficulty is about the language; I have picked up a good deal of German since I have been here, but I am afraid not enough to enable me to learn much from the servants; besides, they would probably discover the accent."

"Happily," replied Harcourt, "we need be under no fear as to that. The person who let me into the castle just now, and ushered me upstairs, was an Englishwoman, and I saw a kind of groom standing in the court who, from his appearance, I should certainly say was the same. And, probably, if two of the servants are English, the whole are."

"That will do excellently then," said Philip, "and I will start at once. I know quite enough German.

to impose upon them as to what I am myself ; and to gain the information we want from them, I can talk broken English. I shall, of course, find you here when I return." And Philip started accordingly.

CHAP. XII.

"The minutes on Time's watch were leaden hours to me."

MITCHELL.

It was nearly an hour before Philip returned; but his expedition proved to have been entirely successful. He had disposed of the whole of his fish—(Butler little knew the source from whence his late dinner had been supplied that day)—and had also ascertained many of the facts with which the reader is already acquainted. Lucy was in the castle, he told Harcourt, and was confined in that ruinous-looking tower in the wing opposite to that inhabited by the family. She was strictly confined, the room which she tenanted being entered from another; of this the so-called nurse, a German, as Philip had ascertained, and stone-deaf, was the almost constant occupant. The approach to these two rooms was impracticable from the tower itself, the staircase being ruined; they were accessible only through the man-servant's room, the key of the door leading from which hung all day in the kitchen, and at night

was placed under the man's own pillow. As regarded Lucy herself, the household generally, as far as Philip could gather without exciting suspicion, appeared to consider her derangement as a matter of course. Upon investigating the sources of this opinion, however, he found that they were of a very vague character, and in fact rested entirely on Butler's unquestioned assertion. That something of an untoward nature had occurred at Baden-Baden seemed probable, and was confirmed by the patience with which Lucy herself submitted to the restraints now imposed upon her, although at the same time it was quite compatible with the mere passing effects of delirium or fever. The only other appearance of a disturbed intellect which the domestics appeared to have observed was the low sad wail which, on one occasion, at Butler's suggestion, they had listened to underneath the tower where she was confined. On the other hand, Philip said, he evidently gathered from the servant's manner, particularly that of the out-door man, Jelps, that as far as they had themselves seen anything of Lucy, they had observed nothing which could in any way lead to the supposition of the terrible malady with which she was supposed to be afflicted; in fact, Mr. Jelps's opinion, when sifted from the feeling of confidence and duty

to his employer with which it was at present complicated, appeared to lean very much to the conviction of Lucy's entire sanity.

Harcourt's anxiety was considerably relieved by the account Philip thus brought. Not only did it prove that Lucy was actually in the building to which he had thus singularly penetrated, almost within his very reach, but it held out hopes that Butler's account of her state of mind, even if there were any foundation at all for it, was probably grossly exaggerated, and had magnified the delirium of some fever or serious illness into a malady which had no existence. At the same time, the position of Lucy's room, as described by Philip, and the fact of there being no means of approaching it without the cognisance of the whole household, appeared to offer a sufficient guarantee for her present security. Under these reflections, Harcourt was disposed to think that their best course would be to return to S——burg, and apply to the local authorities that evening, if possible, or at any rate, at an early hour the following day, for some protection to Lucy against Butler's suspected designs. "Although I must confess, Philip," added Harcourt, "that if I were to follow my own inclination, it would be to confront the scoundrel at

once in his own room, and either pitch him out of window, or else keep guard over him until we could obtain some legal sanction for our proceedings."

Philip, however, who, since his disclosure to Harcourt, and especially since he saw that the narration of the unhappy circumstances which had been so long buried in his own breast did not excite in the latter the horror which he had anticipated, had, as if relieved from some heavy burden which had long weighed him down, displayed in more than one instance a thoughtfulness and decision far beyond his years, shook his head at both these propositions. "You will, of course, be able to judge best, Mr. Harcourt," he said, "but I do not feel satisfied with either of the plans you name. I have a strange presentiment hanging over me that something is to happen to-night, Mr. Harcourt, I know not what. There was something, indeed, I heard at the Castle which made me a little uneasy (I ought to have mentioned it before); it was, that to-day, after your visit, Mr. Butler went up to Lucy's room, and unfastened the straps and chain with which she has been confined on the bed, I think they said ever since the family have been in the castle. I cannot at all see his motives for doing this; it may be merely that your coming has alarmed him, and he is afraid of

continuing the same rigour as before ; but still he is a very deep villain, and I do not feel altogether easy about it. But besides this, I have had, as I said, a singular feeling hanging over me ever since I first came here ; I cannot at all account for it, or even explain in what it consists, except as I have already done, but it is a kind of presentiment that something dreadful is to happen to-night. Perhaps you will think me less foolish for speaking in this way, when I mention to you (which I did not recollect when I was telling my own story) that this is the very night poor Charles died. It is the same day of the month exactly."

"I do not think you at all foolish, Philip," answered Harcourt ; " we never can account for such impressions upon our minds ; I have experienced them myself, and certainly, on one occasion at least, with only too good reason. But tell me what you propose ? "

" Well, Mr. Harcourt, if you did not think it too wild a plan, I do feel exceedingly anxious to get Lucy out of the castle to-night. I cannot shake off this mysterious feeling that there is some dark shadow hanging over us ; and, although I cannot see any exact way in which he might hurt her, I should feel miserable at leaving her under the same

roof with such a wretch as that Butler even for twenty-four hours longer. I do not indeed think he would attempt anything against her, with the risk of being detected; he is too cunning for that; but he might do something which would look like accident, such as setting fire to the castle; or more probably, perhaps when we returned to-morrow, the whole party would have disappeared; gone beyond the possibility of our tracing them. Besides, the magistrates, or whatever they call them here, might refuse to give you the power to act. No, Mr. Harcourt, if you do not see any objection to it, I feel that the best course is to take the law into our own hands; something seems to urge me irresistibly to do so."

"I should be happy enough," answered Harcourt, "especially now I have your sanction, as Lucy's brother. Shall we go and confront Butler at once then; as I said, I would far sooner do this."

"No, I think not that either," answered Philip. "He is both clever and reckless; we have no sufficient ground to allege for our entrance into the castle; and although I only saw one man, there may be others, and the attempt might only end in our own expulsion by force; in which case, Butler, having had the alarm given him, might attempt

something desperate at once which it would be wholly out of our power to thwart. No! I think this plan would be more hazardous for Lucy's safety than the other. What I should like to do, if it were feasible, and you would sanction it, would be to get her ourselves out of the room to-night, without Butler's knowledge. I found out the tower in which it was situated as I left the castle; would you mind coming and looking at the place now, Mr. Harcourt, with me? It is quite dusk, so that we need not fear being observed; besides, the servants seem all as frightened as possible at being out after dark."

Harcourt was carried away by his companion's impetuosity, which even if it had not convinced his judgment, still coincided far more with his own inclinations than any more deliberate course of action; and they proceeded on their voyage of discovery accordingly. To make what followed at all intelligible to the reader, we must ask permission very briefly to sketch the exact position of the tower towards which Philip and Harcourt now directed their movements.

The castle, which had been of some magnitude, consisted originally, like numerous other structures of the same period, of two courts or quadrangles.

The outermost and larger of these, entered by the gate which still constituted the principal approach to the Schloss, was inclosed on the three external sides by low buildings, which had formerly served as stables and sleeping-rooms for the numerous retainers of the feudal chieftain by whom it was occupied. The fourth side, as usual, had contained the principal apartments of the family; a low arched passage ran through it, and communicated with the inner or smaller court, in which the chapel, dining-hall, and other buildings, had formerly been situated; this, however, we need not describe for our present purpose. The part to which we wish to direct the reader's attention is the large outer quadrangle. The rooms occupied by Butler and his family were in the left hand corner of the fourth, or internal side of this; then came a mass of ruin, traversed by the corridor we have described in a previous chapter, and then in the right hand corner, the tower where Lucy was confined. Of the other three sides, the only one which remained entire, and some of the vaulted rooms of which were still used as cattle-sheds, was that on the left hand, adjoining and running at right angles to Butler's apartments, together with a part of the side in which the gateway was situated; so much of it, namely,

as lay on the left of the gateway, between it and the cattle-sheds. The rest was almost entirely demolished, as was also the only remaining side, that which adjoined and ran at right angles to Lucy's tower. Crumbling masses of these demolished buildings lay on the ground, covered with vegetation, and making the footing difficult and insecure, although not absolutely precluding it.

If our readers have been at all able to follow the above description, they will see at once that both Lucy's tower and the apartment occupied by Butler were now, as far as the structure itself went, accessible over the ruined heaps which now represented the sides of the original quadrangle lying between that tower and the entrance gate. As regarded the *tower*, this still continued to be the case; but the access to the apartments of Butler and the rest of the family had been hastily closed, on the recent repairs of the castle, by a rough wooden palisade. A gate in this led out into the ruinous part of the quadrangle beyond, and it was through this gate that Butler had conducted the servants to the foot of the tower, on the night when he first heard the low moaning cry of Lucy's which we have described in a previous chapter. We may now rejoin our two adventurers.

With a beating heart Philip and Harcourt found themselves at the base of the structure which now held the object dearer to each of them, although with a different train of emotions, than life itself. The second floor, on which, as Philip had ascertained, Lucy was confined, was a very considerable height above the ground; and their first object, after a brief glance at the narrow window (imperfectly seen in the dim light), which from the description Philip had procured of the situation of Lucy's and Ulrike's rooms he at once concluded must be his sister's, was to discover if there were any feasible mode of approach. For a long time their quest seemed almost baffled. At length Philip's quick eye fancied he discovered some features of the ruin, which he pointed out to Harcourt, and by which they ultimately both concluded that it was probable the window would be accessible. It was determined, however, not to make the trial until a later hour in the night. The moon, which was nearly at the full, would then have risen, and without much more light than they had at present the attempt was out of the question. In addition to this, it was evident by the passage of lights, and occasionally the sound of distant voices from the inhabited part of the building, that the

family were still on the alert, and probably would not have retired to rest for some two or three hours; and Harcourt now quite coincided with Philip's opinion that it was better, on Lucy's own account, not to run any risk of being interrupted. Finally (and this decided Harcourt), it was evidently impossible that Lucy could walk any distance after her long illness and confinement; it was indispensable that some mode of conveyance should be found for her. It was accordingly arranged, at Philip's suggestion, that Harcourt should remain at the foot of the tower, keeping a strict watch over its occupant, and in the event of any suspicious occurrence taking place, at once summoning the household, or acting so as to protect Lucy; while Philip himself should again descend the valley to the farm where he had left the horse, and bring up the latter for Lucy to ride, in case their plan of operations were attended with a successful result. Philip promised at the same time to furnish himself at the farm with a file and crowbar, or some similar implements, which might very likely turn out to be indispensable for the operations they projected.

As it was calculated that at the latest Philip would return by ten o'clock and it was wholly im-

probable that Butler, even if he meditated any such atrocity as Philip supposed, would attempt it before that hour, Harcourt readily assented to the above proposal, and after watching his young companion thread his way safely among the crumbling and moss-grown fragments of the dismantled wall, prepared himself for his solitary vigil.

CHAP. XIII.

— "But one alas! — is not."

VIRG. *Æn.* i. 584.

WE must not exhaust the reader's patience by detailing the various mingled emotions which crowded on our hero's heart and brain as he stood hour after hour at the foot of the tower in which Lucy was confined, so near her, and yet still separated by impediments which almost seemed insuperable. Now that Philip was not at hand to second the impetuosity of his own feelings, Harcourt began to reflect whether he had not been almost rash in permitting the present enterprise. Supposing that the suspicions which Philip seemed, by a kind of intuition, to treat almost as certainties, were after all ill-founded; that Lucy was really, although not perhaps in the state which his apprehensions had at first painted, yet from some mysterious cause afflicted more or less with the fearful malady which Butler had alleged; was he, in that case, acting a kind, a considerate part towards Lucy herself; might not

the terror occasioned by his own and Philip's sudden appearance precipitate the very evil which he regarded with so much apprehension ; or, even if no such result followed, still would not the publicity, which even in this secluded district could not fail to follow the plan they had proposed for carrying off Lucy from the castle, be a cruel addition to the suffering which her disorder itself must already have occasioned her relatives ? In particular, was not the course he was adopting dishonourable and wrong as regarded Mrs. Butler, after the communication which had passed between himself and that lady ? And this suggested to Harcourt a train of reflections still more disheartening. Was it certain that Lucy herself would consent to come with them, even if free from mental complaint ? Would she not feel bound, as she had before done, by the expression of her mother's wishes : what proof had he that his suspicions were well-founded ? On the other hand, supposing her mind were really affected, how was he to treat her ?—What a subject to break to one possibly hovering on the verge of the insidious malady !

While Harcourt thus pondered, torn by a thousand conflicting thoughts, and wholly insensible both of the piercing cold of the night and of the time, now.

amounting to some two or three hours, which had elapsed since Philip's departure, on a sudden a strain of music rose on the dark gloom which surrounded him, low, but perfectly distinct, and inexpressibly sweet and touching. It was Lucy's voice! Latterly, after the irritability from which she had at first suffered had subsided, and especially after her mind had, from the causes we have referred to in a previous chapter, been relieved from the fear it previously entertained of the supposed hereditary malady of her family descending to herself, the poor girl had, at times like the present, when she felt certain that she would not be overheard, found some pleasure in singing over her favourite pieces, especially such as she recollected Harcourt had appeared to prefer in their evenings at Plas Newydd. Little did Lucy suspect who was her listener on the present occasion. The air was one which Harcourt knew well. It was a plaintive melody, with occasionally a burst of a more joyous character, relapsing again, after a few bars, into a touching and melancholy cadence. In some places the piece was arranged as a duet, which Harcourt had often sung with Lucy; and, certainly, he had never felt greater difficulty than in abstaining from taking up his own part of the song at those portions in which he could

almost have fancied the voice of the performer assumed a dejected and mournful tone, as if it missed the accompaniment to which it had been accustomed. The imprudence, however, might have been fatal to their whole plan; and, with a laudable exercise of self-control, our hero refrained. A second trial of the same kind might have been too much for human endurance, but Lucy did not sing again; either from weariness, or from her attention being attracted by the appearance of the moon, the broad disc of which now rose in full splendour above a low ridge of hills at some distance from the castle. Of one thing, however, Harcourt now felt assured; that whatever else might happen, Lucy was at least not what he had feared. To a person of Harcourt's highly refined temperament, the modulations of Lucy's voice in singing, more than even look or word, had always appeared to breathe of herself; as it were the articulate utterances of her own matchless heart; and now, every note in the well-remembered air seemed like an assurance that thought, feeling, love, gentleness, all the faculties of mind and soul which had twined themselves round the very being of the listener, were unchanged as ever. Impossible that those sweet rich tones, so expressive, so full of intense pathos, so intellectually delivered,

could co-exist with the vacant stare of the idiot or the disorder of a confused brain !

Still, however, Harcourt, extreme as the happiness had been of once more hearing the voice on which he had so often hung with delight in more auspicious circumstances, could not divest himself of the apprehension to which we have already adverted, that Lucy herself might not be disposed to sanction the proposed mode of escape ; and to this was now added another cause of perplexity, Philip's non-arrival. The clear full radiance which now streamed through the building, showing every cranny and crevice in the mouldering walls, enabled Harcourt to ascertain the time, which it had been previously too dark for him to do ; he now found with surprise that it was half-past ten o'clock. An hour of great suspense followed. Harcourt could not divest his mind of the fears which Philip's gloomy presentiment had awakened, and he felt that if Butler were bent on attempting any sinister design against Lucy, the present would probably be the time he would select. The anxiety of the moment was terrible. Eagerly and vigilantly did the young lover strain every faculty, both to collect the first intimation of Philip's approach, and also to detect any danger which might be threatening Lucy in her solitude.

It was with a feeling of unspeakable relief that Harcourt at length caught the sound of distant footsteps. The person, whoever it was, was advancing cautiously, and the sound might not have been audible to an ear less excited than Harcourt's now was; but he distinguished them plainly, and in the course of a few minutes more Philip's figure emerged into the broad moonlight among the ruins at the foot of the tower. Philip had been detained more than an hour by the stupidity of the people at the farm, who for a long time, notwithstanding his repeated summons, refused to give him admittance. He had at length succeeded in getting the horse, but the darkness of the night before the moon rose, and the necessity of extreme caution in pursuing the rough bridle-path which led from the main valley up to the Schloss, had occupied far more time than he had calculated on, and he had only a few minutes before reached the brow of the castle hill. Here he had left the horse tethered in the wood, ready for Lucy in case she could be got down from her place of confinement.

It was now decided at once to make the attempt upon the tower; the plan of operations was soon arranged. Philip, it was settled, should climb up to Lucy's window by the route which he had previously

suggested, leaving Harcourt below. The exact mode of communicating the state of affairs to Lucy, and the arguments which might be necessary to induce her to accompany them, were left to Philip's discretion, who was to be guided by circumstances at the time; the principal object, of course, was to avoid frightening her, if possible, or at any rate to give her such an immediate explanation as should remove the alarm she might naturally feel at the appearance of a stranger. Harcourt suggested that it would be better for Philip at once to avow his relationship to Lucy, promising her a full explanation at another time; his share in Charles' death, Harcourt thought it was both desirable and possible might never come to Lucy's knowledge. He then briefly mentioned what had occurred during the time of his watch underneath the tower, and his conviction that, at any rate, nothing like derangement was to be apprehended. Should Lucy consent to escape with them, Harcourt added, it would probably be the best course for Philip to lower her from the window, as he had known done in cases of fire, by tying the bedclothes together; adding, if these were insufficient, some of the cordage from the bed. Philip then started on his expedition.

It was shortly after midnight, when Lucy, who

had been wearied with the excitement and agitation of the preceding day, and had fallen into a sweet although light sleep, was roused by a sound immediately outside the solitary window of her chamber. She had lain down on the bed, but was not undressed. Upon the removal, in the morning of the same day, of the restraints by which she had been confined, some of her own clothes had been brought to her in exchange for the long close-fitting robe which she had worn during the months of captivity she had so patiently undergone. Tired as she was, Lucy had thrown herself on the bed shortly after the song of which Harecourt had so unexpectedly been the auditor, and, as we have said, had fallen asleep. When she now woke, the moon, which she remembered to have seen rising at the time she lay down, was already high in the heavens. The window of the room was at no great distance above the ground, and the clear rays poured in in an uninterrupted stream upon the floor. Suddenly their radiance was obscured; some dark object intervened; gradually it became plainer, assumed the form of a human face; she saw the lineaments clearly, unmistakeably. Once more, after the lapse of two whole years, that living Charles, that face of robust young life which on the night of her brother's death had appeared to her, resembling

so closely, and yet contrasting so vividly with, his emaciated features, rose before her gaze; seen, as before, in the clear full moonlight, terrifying, and yet with a pitying mournful aspect which effaced even the terror in an involuntary sensation of interest and sympathy; mysterious, thrilling, inexplicable!

But this time the vision was not to pass away. The glass of the window was dashed in; a strong, firm hand forced back the iron bar of the casement, which was old and rusty, and yielded readily to its grasp; a clear passage was effected, and the intruder leapt lightly, but not violently, into the room. Still the shock was almost more than Lucy's enfeebled frame could bear. Springing from her bed, she clasped her hands in an attitude of extreme terror; "Who, who art thou," she cried, "who thus recallest the very dead to my sight?—Is it true what they said? are my senses indeed departing?"

It was fortunate that Harcourt had mentioned to Philip the likeness which he had observed between himself and Lucy. The quick apprehension of the lad at once discovered what was passing in his sister's mind in regard to Charles. "Miss Akehurst," he said, "do not be terrified; there is nothing but good meant you; we are come here to protect you

from a great danger. And now," he continued, fixing his eyes upon her with a mournful expression of the deepest interest, "look at me steadily, and tell me what likeness it is you see. You spoke, when I entered the room, as though I had recalled to you the features of some person whom you had known; whose were they?"

"Whoever you are," answered Lucy, trembling violently, "your likeness to my dead brother Charles, especially when you look at me as you are now doing, is most striking."

"Miss Akehurst! *Lucy!*" answered Philip, still bending the same earnest gaze upon her; "is there nothing within your own heart that tells you it may be more than a likeness? Lucy, you had another brother once, besides Charles; one who was supposed to have died in infancy."

"I know it," replied Lucy; "it was little Walter. He was born a year or two before Charles; he died quite as a baby. I remember, young as I was, seeing the little face when it was put into its coffin."

"Lucy," said Philip, "you see that same baby before you now; not the dead child, for whom I was changed, but your own living brother Walter! It was a strange story, and I never heard it until some two years since. I was brought up as the

brother of one whom you knew well — Letty Graves."

"Letty's brother? the one who worked at the village some miles off," asked Lucy, incapable of repressing the deep interest aroused by Philip's words, but still trembling from head to foot with extreme agitation.

"The same;" Philip replied. "Two years ago, as I have said, I found out my real parentage; at the same time, I saw that there were imperative reasons why no one else should ever know it. I have kept the secret (which nothing but your present danger would ever have forced from me) all this time; but oh! Lucy! I have longed to tell you all; I have longed to love you, and to be loved and known by you. Often, when you little knew it, I watched to catch sight of your face, or even hear your voice or footstep; twice before, you have actually seen me."

"Once I know I have," answered Lucy; "on the night when Charles died, you climbed up to the window, and looked in as you have now done. I noticed the likeness then."

"Yes," said Philip; "and you have seen me once since that, although I succeeded in concealing my face from you, fearing you might recollect it

from the former occasion. It was at Mr. Evans's funeral at Llanfihangel."

The blood rushed violently to Lucy's heart, and then again diffused itself in a bright glow over her pale cheek and temples. Philip watched the effect his words had produced, but he thought it safest to give her some little time to recover from her surprise, before he followed up the connection they had suggested. His own heart, too, was full to overflowing, and he longed to fold in his arms the form on which he had so often gazed from a distance with trembling earnestness. "Lucy," he said, "you believe my story, do you not? You are, you will be my own sister, my own dear sister?"

There was a simple truthfulness about Philip's manner which smote conviction upon Lucy's mind. At the same time, perhaps, the instinct of nature, aided by the likeness which every moment appeared to her clearer and clearer, woke up strongly and suddenly within her, especially in the state of extreme agitation and excitement into which she was now thrown. After a moment's hesitation, responding to Philip's mute look and gesture, she threw herself into his arms, and there wept long and bitterly.

Once in their young lives, — once, for the first and

last time, — did that long-severed pair mingle their tears in one fervent embrace, the embrace which Philip had so passionately coveted, and seal on each other's lips the passport of a more lasting separation !

After a few minutes of silence, Philip gently disengaged his sister from his embrace, and, seating her on the low bedstead, returned to the previous subject of their present interview. “ Now, then, Lucy dear,” he said, “ I want you to tell me, as shortly as you can, all that has happened to you since Mr. Harcourt and myself left Llanfihangel (you have, doubtless, surmised by this time, that I am the lad whom he took from thence as his *protégé*) ; particularly, I want you to tell me everything that Mr. Butler has said and done.”

Lucy complied with her brother's request, and rapidly ran over the occurrences of the last sixteen months. Under other circumstances, Lucy would have scrupled to mention to any one, and especially to Philip, the conversation which she had heard between Butler and Hilkiah Owen at Plas Newydd ; but the total discrepancy of the account then given by Butler as to her mother's family, with his subsequent statement to Dr. — at Baden-Baden, of which, as the reader will recollect, Lucy had for the

first time become conscious in the course of the present day, and on which her mind had been dwelling incessantly ever since that time, enabled her to do so now without hesitation. She then briefly detailed the agony of mind she had endured in her long seclusion at Plas Newydd, and still more in the round of gaieties into which she had been forced at Baden-Baden; of her own illness at the latter place she spoke as something very serious, although she could not of course recollect the circumstances; she then described the removal to Schloss Herzenfeldt, and the nature of her confinement there, adding the hope she had felt, from her evidently declining health, that she might not live long enough to become herself a victim to the terrible malady of her family. Finally, she referred to Butler's having released her from personal restraint that morning; and mentioned the doubts which, she said, the associations awakened by his tone and manner in replying to a question she had incidentally asked, had led her to feel as to the correctness of his former statement to Hilkiah at Plas Newydd. "There was evidently," Lucy said, "some great mystery in the business."

"There is no mystery at all," impetuously cried Philip, whose quick intelligence had in some degree, even from this brief statement, unravelled the dark

plot which Butler had contrived with so much art, and whose mind was now wholly at rest on the subject of Lucy's perfect freedom from any mental disorder; "no mystery at all, unless it be how human beings, and one, alas! so nearly connected to ourselves, can have acted in such a manner. But, Lucy dear, you are not in safety here; I would not now trust you for half an hour longer within their reach; Butler is villain enough to attempt anything. You must come with me instantly, Lucy. I think, too, I may now venture to tell you," continued Philip, seeing that his sister seemed to hesitate, "that I am not alone; there is help at hand;—well, in short, I may as well have it out, Lucy; *Mr. Harcourt is here!* He has been waiting at the foot of the tower for some hours; and has a horse near at hand, and every thing ready to assist your escape."

"Oh! Walter," answered Lucy, pressing her hand to her forehead, for even the precautions her brother had taken could not prevent the agitating effect of this fresh intelligence; "I do not know, indeed I do not. If I were only sure, as you say, that there has been some delusion, some trick; that this terrible malady is not really hanging over me! But even then I do not know how I could possibly

go. I am not foolish or affected, Walter, but you of course cannot understand how a woman shrinks from even the appearance of anything unbecoming or unmaidenly. I would rather stop and brave the worst."

"I shall be your escort, Lucy," answered Philip; "under the protection of your own brother you may surely venture. Besides, in the present emergency, you must really throw aside all such feelings; it may be life and death to you, perhaps to all of us, at this very moment. Butler's releasing you, after he saw Mr. Harcourt this morning—"

Lucy started to her feet in extreme surprise. "What do you mean, Walter? say that again: Butler saw Mr. Harcourt this morning!"

"Certainly," answered Philip. "They were half an hour and more together. Mr. Harcourt came to the castle quite in ignorance of your being here, and met your spaniel, little Flora; he then called on Butler, who told him I know not what about yourself, and got him out of the castle as soon as he could on some pretext or the other."

Lucy did not now hesitate for an instant. Hers was one of those intensely truthful natures which can hardly even comprehend or believe in a falsehood; when it is impossible to do otherwise, it resents it

keenly, almost as a personal indignity. Harcourt had been there this morning! and yet Butler had distinctly assured her that there had been no communication with him since the letter from Plas Newydd! Lucy's spirit was now fairly roused. "I will come with you at once," she said; "that man has uttered a gross falsehood to me this very morning; I believe now all you say of his villany." And hastily telling Philip what had occurred, Lucy gathered together the few articles which it was necessary to take with her, and prepared for flight.

The plan suggested by Harcourt was then rapidly adopted. The bedding, when cut into shreds, with the addition of the cords from the sacking proved just long enough to reach the ground, and Philip, raising Lucy to the window, lashed the cords firmly round her, and then gently lowered her to the foot of the tower, Harcourt receiving her in his arms. But the reaction of feeling, coupled with her previous exhausted and enfeebled state, had been too much for Lucy's strength, and as her head was once more propped on the loving heart whose every pulse beat in strong emotion under its precious burden, Lucy fainted, and lay for some time in a dead swoon. Her eyes at length opened, with a faint cry of surprise. Gradually the recollection of the present

scene returned, and, murmuring in a low tone, "Edgar!" she resigned herself to Harcourt's conduct. Hastily wrapping round her some warm covering, which Philip, with almost womanly forethought, had brought up from the farm, and calling to the latter to follow, Harcourt bore his charge to the part of the wood where the horse was tethered, and prepared for their departure.

Immediately afterwards Philip commenced his own descent. The rope which had assisted Lucy's escape had been unfortunately allowed to fall to the ground, and Philip was therefore compelled, in returning, to pursue the same route by which he had reached his sister's window. It was not without some uneasiness that he found himself reduced to this course. The lower part of the ascent indeed presented no difficulty to an expert climber, as it was assisted by a fragment of the external wall. This had originally run at right angles to Lucy's place of confinement, and still reached, with a broken edge inclined at a moderate slope, to about half the height of the tower. Between this point, however, and the window of Lucy's room, which was on the second story, the ascent had been very precarious; it being necessary to climb up the face of the tower itself with such assistance as could

be derived from some small projections of the masonry, and occasionally from the roots of the ivy which had twined itself over portions of the building. It was this portion of the route accordingly which, on their first scrutiny, had appeared almost to baffle the adventure. The whole of the masonry in this part was in a very loose and crumbling state, and many of the stones round which the ivy had wound, instead of lending support to it, were themselves forced out of their place by its growth. Indeed, nothing but Philip's unusual strength and activity, united with his determination to save Lucy at all hazards, had enabled him to surmount the difficulties which he had here encountered.

It was with some degree of mistrust, therefore, to which was added a kind of weight hanging over him for which he felt it difficult to account, that Philip prepared for his descent. No accident occurred, however, for some distance; and Philip was beginning to congratulate himself on having almost reached the broken wall at the side of the tower, from which the descent to the ground would be comparatively easy, when a large root of the ivy, on which he had been compelled for a moment to throw his whole weight, suddenly gave way in his hand, and he was precipitated to the foot of the

tower. On recovering from the shock, Philip found himself less hurt than he had expected. Some of the bedding which he had thrown out to secure Lucy's descent had broken his fall, and rising hastily, he turned from the tower to follow Harcourt and his sister, who were out of sight before the accident occurred. At this moment, however, a large mass of the stonework from which the broken ivy had grown, and which after the removal of the latter had hung for a minute or two tottering on the face of the wall, fell with a heavy crash, one of the fragments striking Philip on the chest, and again dashing him with considerable force to the ground.

It was some quarter of an hour after this when Philip joined his sister and Harcourt. The latter had become anxious, and had been about to go in search of him, but Lucy's own condition required his whole assistance. As Philip now approached, Harcourt was struck by his wild and agitated look, as well as by the unusual slowness of his movements: the time pressed, however, and they commenced their route to S——burg, Philip leading the horse, while our hero himself supported Lucy on the saddle. The moonlight still shone in clear radiance around them, and Harcourt's mind, relieved from its late suspense, would have begun to ex-

perience a sensation of happiness to which it had long been a stranger, had it not been for Lucy's weakness, and for the evident exhaustion and weariness of Philip himself, who at times appeared hardly capable of continuing the exertion of walking. Harcourt once or twice asked him if he was ill, or would rest, but Philip only shook his head, and continued leading the horse as before; and on reflection, Harcourt felt disposed to attribute the appearances he had noticed to the agitating disclosure which Philip had that day made, as well as to the recollections of Charles's death on the same night, and probably, as he gathered, nearly at the same hour, two years before.

At length, after a journey which seemed interminable, they reached the town of S—burg. Harcourt was surprised to observe the appearance of some commotion in the principal street, especially in the vicinity of the hotel at which he had taken up his temporary abode; lights were also gleaming, late as it was, in several of the windows of the house. It occurred to Harcourt however that his own non-appearance for so many hours after the time when he had ordered dinner might possibly have contributed to this state of things; and he was not without some expectation of being saluted on

his return to the hotel by the rebuke of the landlady, an honest but rather garrulous specimen of the German female character, on his keeping the household out of their beds to such an unseasonable time.

Harcourt's expectations were not wholly disappointed. At his summons at the door the worthy hostess instantly appeared, with the look of a person whose natural repose has been protracted to some hours beyond its usual period, and who is not indisposed to expend the slight accumulation of bilious sensations thereby occasioned upon the first object who may come within its reach. But hardly had the good woman commenced her tirade when a new party to the conference appeared in the background. This was a lady, evidently English, of a pleasant but delicate expression of face, who appeared to have been also aroused by Harcourt's summons, and who now, as if expecting some arrival of importance, pressed past the landlady to the front door, shading her eyes from the lantern which one of the ostlers on the outside held up by way of assisting the general *éclaircissement* of affairs. Great was Harcourt's astonishment, and scarcely less great that of the new comer (whom our readers have probably surmised to be Mrs. Frederick Akehurst), when Lucy, who had latterly appeared somewhat revived by the air and

motion, sliding from the horse, threw herself, with an eager cry of "My Aunt! my dearest Aunt!" into the arms of this last performer in the scene.

The attention however of the whole party present was soon diverted to another and more painful quarter. After quitting his hold of Lucy's horse, Philip had staggered, rather than walked, into the large gateway which, as usual in Germany, formed the principal entrance to the hotel, and had remained there unnoticed, feebly propping himself against one of the side walls, during the bustle which had ensued on Harcourt and Lucy's arrival. One of the bystanders now directed attention to his evident illness; in fact, it was high time. The clear moonlight poured in in a flood of lustre under the gateway, but in front of the place where Philip stood it was already darkened with a pool of blood, a stream of which still issued from his lips: while a heavy film, the interception of light and earthly love, had begun to form over the eyes. Harcourt and Lucy both flew to his side; but before their support could reach him, the form of the dying lad had slid to the ground. He had sufficient strength left to return, with a feeble grasp of his hand, the deep sorrowing kiss which Lucy pressed upon his forehead; a low gurgling of the breath

then followed, and, with a deep sigh, the spirit which had known so much sorrow fled to other homes and an existence beyond doubt and care.

A subsequent examination showed that Philip's chest must have actually been crushed in by the mass of stone which, from the appearance of his dress, had evidently fallen upon it in his descent from the tower; and it was almost incredible that after a blow of such violence he could have accomplished on foot, with the additional exertion of leading Lucy's horse, the long distance that intervened between the castle and the town of S—burg. Every step must indeed have been taken in intense agony; but the martyr-soul of love had lent its strength, and the brave boy, unflinching until his appointed task was done, had then patiently met his end, the atoning stream of his young life flowing forth at the feet of those whom he had died to protect and serve.

It was fortunate perhaps for Lucy that the temporary excitement which the unexpected meeting with her aunt had occasioned was succeeded by an evident exhaustion and need of repose, which obliged her at once to quit the scene of occurrences so painful. Under Mrs. Akehurst's watchful superintendence, every restorative that could be adminis-

tered was applied in the low but comfortable chamber to which Lucy was soon removed; while that of which she probably stood in most need, the sound untroubled sleep which she had hardly enjoyed since her removal to the castle, speedily came to her aid, obliterating for the time even the agitating scenes in which she had latterly been engaged. While matters are thus progressing in the hotel at S—burg, we will take the opportunity of narrating the proceedings of those whom our story has now assembled within the mouldering walls of Schloss Herzenfeldt.

CHAP. XIV.

"She spoke ; I cannot tell, or true
Or saving were that late return :
She uttered words, which those who knew
And heard them sought but to unlearn ;
Yet one who chronicled what fell
Thus taught it me, and thus I tell."

NORTHOVER.

PURSUANT to the promise we have given at the close of our last chapter, we will now return to Frederick Akehurst and his party, whom we left just arrived at the principal entrance of Schloss Herzenfeldt, about half-past one o'clock in the same night which has already been productive of so many momentous occurrences. By a comparison of the time, our readers will at once see that this was shortly after Butler, having closed the panel which gave access to the subterraneous passage, had proceeded on his errand to Lucy's chamber ; while, by a similar process, it will be evident that the long detention which Frederick Akehurst and his followers had undergone in the forest had prevented

their falling in, as they would otherwise have done, with Harcourt and Philip.

Mr. Akehurst's repeated summonses at the gate of the Schloss appeared to be wholly unsuccessful in producing any impression upon those within; a circumstance which may appear less surprising when it is recollected that Butler had added to the Malaga with which he had treated Mr. Jelps and his fellow-domestics that evening, an opiate quite powerful enough, at this early period of the night, to drown any sounds from without the building. Finding this to be the case, Frederick Akehurst at length ordered the gate to be forced. Two or three of the party had brought crow-bars, sledge-hammers, and other implements of offence, and a vigorous application of these soon produced the desired effect. The massive gate yielded under their blows; and lighting some hastily formed torches of pinewood, the whole party entered the building. The silence of death seemed to reign over it. "Can it be so?" thought Frederick Akehurst; "can any intimation of our approach have been given to the wretched inmates, which has enabled them to fly, and thus once more disappoint our long and difficult search?" Happily, the question had hardly formed itself in his mind,

before it received a satisfactory answer in the negative.

As Mr. Jelps lay snoring in his apartment, under the combined influence of a sound constitution and of the addition which his worthy employer had made to his evening potations, it did gradually begin to break upon his mind that there was something unusual going on in his vicinity. It happened at the time that Mr. Jelps's slumbering thoughts had been transported to a widely different region and range of occurrences. As the spirit of the Scandinavian chieftain in its future state of existence was supposed once more, with the eager zest of life, to urge its foaming steed over the hunting-grounds of its tribe, so Mr. Andrew Jelps, in the paradise of his dream-land, found himself again refreshing certain experiences of his youth, in pursuing with a quick and ardent step the chase, to which he had formerly been much addicted, of the brock or badger, over the dun slopes of his native Cheviots. From this interesting pastime he was recalled by what appeared to him the shouts of his companions at an immeasurable distance behind. Gradually, as he paused in the pursuit, it appeared to him that the sounds were not so very distant; eventually, descending into the arena of real life, he became convinced

that they were immediately outside the door of his own bedchamber. Alternating between gloomy impressions of the castle on fire, and of an outbreak of terrific violence from the lunatic upstairs, Mr. Jelps hastily donned his clothes, and confronted the intruders on his repose. The other servants appeared nearly at the same time.

Great as the surprise of the new comers had been at the aspect of affairs within the castle, it was more than equalled by that of its habitual inmates, on the discovery, which was now quickly made, that Mrs. Butler was lying, locked into the usual sitting-room of the family, and apparently in a dying state, upon the floor, and that Miss Akehurst had disappeared from the tower. The disordered appearance of the bed, and the fragments of broken glass from the window with which the room was strewn, offered some solution of this latter circumstance, as far as regarded the actual mode of exit, but still the occurrence itself was wholly incomprehensible. To these mysteries was also added the non-appearance of the master of the family himself, of whom no trace, even after an hour or two had elapsed, could be found in any part of the building. A still more cruel apprehension than he had previously entertained now filled Frederick Akehurst's mind. Was

it possible that Butler, having received some intimation of their proceedings such as he had previously supposed, had in desperation carried off Lucy into the forest, where she would now be in his power without the possibility of rescue? The supposition seemed wild and incredible; but so much mystery already hung over the transaction that Mr. Akehurst was determined not to forego any chance that might offer for Lucy's discovery. He accordingly despatched a special messenger into S——burg with instructions to collect as many able-bodied men as he could, to explore the recesses of the forest; at the same time he desired that medical assistance might be procured for Mrs. Butler, who still remained insensible.

The progress of Harcourt and his fair companion had been so tedious, that Mr. Akehurst's envoy arrived almost at the same time that Lucy retired to her apartment, thus adding fresh commotion to that which already subsisted in the remote mountain town of S——burg. A message was immediately despatched for the principal medical authority of the town, Doctor Sabin Zolokoffer; while numerous volunteers, excited by the reports which now began to fly abroad in all directions as to the mysterious doings in their vicinity, speedily offered for the pro-

jected exploration of the forest. The party was soon organised, and headed by Doctor Zolokoffer, and avoiding the short cut which had proved so fatal to their predecessors, pushed rapidly on their way towards the dismantled Schloss.

As the Doctor on his arrival brought the news of Lucy's safety, and the assurance that she was now asleep and safe in the hands of the landlady and Mrs. Akehurst, the attention of those who occupied the castle was able to engage itself more exclusively in the direction of Mrs. Butler. The proposed search through the forest was also, now that the safety of its principal object was assured, postponed until the morning, although public curiosity continued to be more than ever excited in regard to Butler himself (who was still nowhere visible), and the singular circumstances under which Mrs. Butler had been found lying locked into her own room. This latter feeling reached its height when Doctor Zolokoffer, who, although more ingenious in the way of experimenting with herbs and simples than would have been recognised by the faculty in this country, was still a well-educated and able practitioner, expressed his opinion that the use of the trephine, if sanctioned by Mr. Akehurst, might still probably restore his sister-in-law to some degree of consciousness for a few

hours; her ultimate recovery, he thought, was impossible. Unfortunately on leaving home the Doctor had not been apprised of the precise nature of the injury sustained by Mrs. Butler, and the necessary instrument (with the use of which he was well acquainted) had been left behind; if Mr. Akehurst thought fit, however, an active messenger on horseback might be at once despatched for it. The offer was gladly accepted, and the envoy departed, Doctor Zolokoffer remaining at the Schloss.

It was in the struggling light of an October morning that the surgical instrument, which the Doctor's housekeeper had successfully ferretted out from the collection of strange, long-necked bottles, stuffed reptiles, jars of specimens in spirits, and other amorphous and inexplicable substances which furnish the studio of a German apothecary, was at last delivered into the good man's hand at Schloss Herzenfeldt. Late as was the hour, no individual of the large party now collected in the castle had thought of retiring to rest. Frederick Akehurst himself, although most anxious to rejoin his wife and Lucy, and greatly agitated by some imperfect rumours which had reached him as to Philip's history and death, still felt himself detained on the spot by the same irresistible fascination. It was like the lifting of the cur-

tain on the eve of some terrible and hitherto unwitnessed tragedy.

At length the Doctor was ready. With a harsh grating sound, the action of the powerful instrument commenced. At first it seemed to produce no effect; a sensation of failure depressed the minds of the numerous spectators, who, by a kind of tacit permission, had crowded into the room to witness the result. After some time, however, the operation was attended with more success. Fleeting at first indistinctly through the curtains and dim recesses of the disordered brain; then gradually forming itself into more defined images; at last, entering and re-occupying one by one the chambers of perception, thought, and memory, the hitherto prostrate mind roused itself from its long slumber, and became a coherent witness and interpreter of the past. Mrs. Butler's first emotions were those which for some weeks previously to the recent occurrences had occupied her round of being; discontent with herself, her present state; apprehension of open disgrace and shame; vindictive feelings towards her husband, as the ultimate cause of the uneasy sensations she had begun to experience. Gradually, the latter feeling became predominant; it then connected itself with the events of the last day, the last few hours. The

crowning act of crime was again suggested to her; at first more obscurely, in the morning scene in her own apartment; then again, in its darker and more avowed atrocity, in the room where she now lay. Again, she saw the glare of Butler's eye upon her as he intercepted her progress towards the door; again, she listened in disdainful silence to the crafty suggestions by which he had endeavoured to overcome her purpose; again, as she endeavoured to bar his exit, the fatal blow was struck which had smitten her, a dying, an unforgiven woman, to the ground. And then, strangely and fearfully, in the chamber crowded with living forms but still and silent as death, the voice of *the accuser* broke forth, as perhaps it shall hereafter against those who have aided the soul's downward progress, in the final day of retribution. "Seize, seize, stay him!" exclaimed the half-conscious sufferer; "he is a desperate, dark villain; a murderer. He will kill her; he has the steel ready; the way is open, no human help can reach her, no cry of hers be ever heard; he will slay her hopelessly, unavenged. Oh, Lucy, my child, my child!"

By degrees, the current of feeling again changed; it now showed the dejection, the deep self-reproach, which latterly in Mrs. Butler's mind had alternated with and ultimately superseded the more passionate

emotions in which she had at first indulged. A more healthful tone was thus induced; gradually she roused herself to some consciousness of present objects; she knew her brother-in-law and Doctor Davis; she was able even to reply to their questions. And thus a general outline of the facts with which the reader is already acquainted was gradually obtained, Doctor Davis noting them down, at Mr. Akehurst's suggestion, as they were likely to become important. Mrs. Butler attempted no concealment; the whole dark plot, so far as she was acquainted with its details, was disclosed to the astonished gaze of her inquirers; her own share in it she neither attempted to palliate nor disguise. A deep remorse had seized upon her heart and soul, and the task of self-accusation seemed almost a relief after the weight of the feelings which had so long preyed upon them in silence.

Anxious as he was to procure some tidings as to Butler's present retreat, Frederick Akehurst thought it advisable not to interrupt the thread of the extraordinary story he now heard, until it should itself furnish the required information. At length he was rewarded. Mrs. Butler's memory had faithfully retained the secret of the sliding panel, and although unacquainted with its exact position, she was able to

describe it sufficiently to enable her hearers, after considerable scrutiny, to discover the mode of opening it. Once more, by a fortunate pressure upon the concealed spring, the skirting board flew back upon its hinge, and the recesses of the subterraneous passage stood disclosed before the eyes of the eager spectators.

Although it seemed probable that Butler, alarmed perhaps by the noise made upon their entrance, might have made his escape in some other direction, Frederick Akehurst still thought it judicious to explore in the first instance the passage by which he was known to have quitted the apartment, and he accordingly detached some of the party who had recently arrived from S——burg for that purpose. The rest were dismissed temporarily to procure some refreshment, Mr. Akehurst himself remaining with the surgeon and Doctor Davis by the bed of his sister-in-law, who, during the latter part of her statement, had shown increased feebleness, and had now relapsed into a state of unconsciousness, in which, by the directions of the medical man, she had been removed into another and more convenient apartment.

Apparently the exploration of the subterraneous passage was likely to prove a matter of greater difficulty than had been supposed. Frequently some of the party came back for reinforcements in numbers,

as well as fresh lights, and ultimately, (with the exception of the three we have mentioned,) the whole of the present male population of the castle, amounting now to nearly thirty persons, became engaged in the search. Frequent shouts were heard, as of persons calling to each other for recognition and guidance in some intricate and involved track; and the sun had already risen high in the sky, before any definite result appeared to have been obtained. At length a cry of horror, raised simultaneously by numerous voices, and of a wholly different character from the vague desultory calls which had preceded it, resounded through the building, startling even the inmates of the sick chamber, and showing, unequivocally, that some catastrophe of a more than usually fearful character had occurred. What this was will be perhaps more conveniently stated in a fresh chapter.

CHAP. XV.

"The house is of a pretty design, and most comfortably arranged."
Auctioneer's Advertisement.

WHEN we were last in Mr. Butler's company, he had just quitted the room in which the interview between himself and Mrs. Butler had taken place, and was commencing his progress along the subterranean passage in the direction of Lucy's apartment. No obstacle presented itself in this stage of his proceedings. Ascending the flight of steps which, as he had already ascertained, led up to the inner room in the tower, Butler paused for a few minutes on the top, and then, hearing no sound within, threw up the sliding panel with extreme care. Ulrike was heard snoring tranquilly in the outside apartment. Great was Butler's surprise and dismay when cautiously and stealthily entering Lucy's chamber, and throwing a rapid glance towards the bed, he discovered, by the aid of the broad moonlight which filled every corner of the room, that his intended victim was not where he had expected to find her.

Uncovering the lamp which he carried, Butler commenced an eager scrutiny of the apartment; but it was so small that a few seconds sufficed to show him that she was not concealed in any part of it; while, at the same time, the appearance of the broken glass on the floor, and the disordered condition of the bedding, which attracted Frederick Akehurst's attention at a subsequent period of the same night, easily suggested the mode of Lucy's escape. Butler had hardly time to recover from this unwelcome surprise, when the unmistakable sound of numerous voices outside the castle, speedily followed by an impetuous knocking at the principal gate, suggested a train of reflection still more unsatisfactory. As these sounds (which the reader will of course apprehend proceeded from the arrival of Mr. Akehurst and his party), far from diminishing, appeared to increase in violence every minute, Butler felt that no time was to be lost. Coupled with Lucy's flight, they led inevitably to the conclusion that some untoward circumstance had occurred, which had not only disappointed his designs upon her, but probably involved considerable personal risk to himself. Notwithstanding, however, the alarm with which Butler was inspired by these considerations, there was another feeling which far

predominated over them. Butler's first thought was, "We are betrayed;" his second, "She has done it;" and the latter was followed by an eager desire to wreak his vengeance upon his wife, hitherto the passive tool in his hands, but who, as he could now no longer doubt from her recent demeanour, had divulged his schemes, and thus probably led to their frustration. Impelled by these conflicting feelings, Butler hastily quitted the room, lamp in hand as before, and adopting the same precautions to conceal his exit as he had done at the other end of the passage, rapidly traversed the latter on his way to his own apartment.

In point of fact, although Mrs. Butler was not, as her husband suspected her to be, the cause either of Lucy's disappearance, or of the arrival of the present nocturnal visitors at the Schloss, her tardy repentance, and the firmness with which she had braved Butler's anger, and refused to concur in the execution of his crowning act of villany, had mainly contributed to saving Lucy's life. Had it not been for the long delay thus interposed, Butler would have proceeded to execute his design, as he had stated to Mrs. Butler it was his intention to do, long before Philip's return to the tower; and notwithstanding the vigilant watch Harcourt was maintain-

ing at the foot of it, he would unquestionably have been too late to avert the catastrophe; while the greater probability was that he would not even have become aware of what was going on in such close proximity to his post. Butler's arrangements had been made, as usual, with consummate skill; not a sound or ray of light would have betrayed his approach to any one without; and Lucy herself, even if awake, would hardly have become aware of his presence in the room before her cries for help, had terror permitted her to raise any, would have been hopelessly stifled by the means Butler had provided for that purpose. But it is time to return to the discomfited subject of the present chapter.

Blinded, as we have said, with rage and passion, and at the same time in no small perplexity and confusion of mind as to the nature of the occurrence which had disappointed his deep-laid plans in the very moment of their execution, as well as to the course which it would now behove him to adopt under the circumstances, Butler hurried along the subterraneous passage in the direction of his own apartment, until he arrived at a point where the passage bifurcated. Butler at once recollected, as the reader will perhaps do (or will easily be able to recall by turning to Butler's description of the lo-

calities to his wife, in the interview described a few chapters back), that in *going towards* Lucy's room some other passage had opened into the one he was pursuing from behind, on the then right-hand side ; and consequently that now, in *returning*, he must, as he had done the night before, eschew this turning, (which would now of course be on his *left*,) and follow the right-hand branch. He accordingly did so, and hurried on as before. To his surprise, however, the distance from the point where he had made this selection to his own apartment, which he remembered on the three previous occasions to have been comparatively short, now seemed to require a considerable time to traverse. Somewhat annoyed at this, and feeling every minute an increased desire to revenge himself upon the person who he now, in the rapid whirl of thoughts which had occupied him since quitting Lucy's chamber, felt no doubt had been the sole author of his disappointment, Butler pressed forward with accelerated speed. He was greatly amazed, however, instead of reaching the steps which led up to the room he was in quest of, to find himself, on turning a sharp angle in the passage, in an underground chamber of some size, although the pace at which he was moving had carried him into the centre of it almost before he

was aware. The room, which was rudely vaulted, and appeared to have been partly constructed of masonry, partly hewn out of the solid rock on which the castle was built, was of an octagonal shape, having, as Butler quickly saw, a doorway in each of the eight corners. The vaulting was supported by a single massive pillar in the centre, round the base of which ran a seat of the same material as the room itself, now decayed and broken in many places. The chamber had no visible communication with the external air or daylight, but notwithstanding this, its atmosphere, although loaded with a heavy earthy smell, was not unwholesome; the floor, like that of the passage which Butler had first discovered, was composed of a fine dry sand.

Hastily running over the features we have described, Butler paused to consider his best course. It was evident there was something wrong; and on endeavouring to recall exactly the particulars of his route, so as to ascertain where the mistake lay, Butler suddenly recollected some differences, perceptible to his eye at the time, but which, in the disturbed and confused state of his thoughts and feelings, had not then made any distinct impression upon his mind, between the right-hand turning which he should have taken in following the direct

route to his own apartment, and that which he had in fact pursued at the spot where he became conscious of the passage bifurcating. In particular, Butler now remembered, that the right-hand passage he had actually selected had struck him as looking much smaller than on previous occasions. Again, there had been a perceptible rise in the ground, almost amounting to a step, soon after the point of junction, which Butler felt sure did not exist in that which he had been accustomed to traverse. More than all, he recollected his eye having been struck by the appearance, in various places, of what he now conjectured must have been the openings of other passages falling into that which he was traversing on each side ; these indications had failed to arouse his suspicion at the time, but now clearly pointed to something wrong.

Putting all these circumstances together, Butler felt no doubt that in his hurry and preoccupation of mind he had inadvertently passed the real turning to the right which he had been accustomed to take, and had entered upon the hitherto unexplored *left-hand* passage, of which the turning he had in fact taken was merely one of the ramifications. Butler now accordingly hastened to repair his error ; but he was met by an unexpected difficulty. In the

precipitation with which he had hurried into the chamber in which he now found himself, and the surprise which the appearance of the latter had occasioned, he had wholly forgotten by which of the eight doorways he had entered. The whole of the eight were exactly like each other, precisely equidistant, of the same dimensions, shape, and colouring, in all respects; and there was no other clue of any kind to direct him. Considerably annoyed at this new difficulty, Butler hastily selected one of these outlets, and passed out of the chamber. He happened to have a penknife about him; and before making his exit, scratched a rude cross on the doorway, so as to identify it on his return, in case his choice of the route should prove erroneous.

At first, however, the passage he had now entered bore a fair resemblance to that of which he was in quest, and of which he recollected the general features. Some distance on, it separated into three branches;—this also corresponded well enough; these might have been some of the openings which had caught his eye in the other passage. Selecting one of the branches, as before, at random, and placing his mark on it, Butler pursued his route. He had to use his knife on more than one occasion now; fresh branches seemed opening out, more,

he thought, than he could possibly have overlooked before; the passage itself, too, seemed to wind round and round, and the distance traversed to be much beyond his computation. At length, Butler made up his mind that this outlet, at any rate, could not be the right one; he had better go back to his last mark, perhaps to the octagonal chamber itself, and begin his search again. Accordingly, he turned to retrace his footsteps. This, however, to his surprise, seemed as difficult as his advance. There was the passage, winding round and round; here and there other branches joined or diverged from it; but his own marks were nowhere visible. He could not account for it; perhaps in his hurry he had forgotten to mark some turning, had overlooked some mark, had deviated in some wrong direction. At any rate, so it was;—*the clue was lost.*

Butler pushed on somewhat hurriedly;—his pen-knife was of no use now. The octagonal chamber was, as it were, the key of his position, and he was eager to return there, although his course must now, he felt, be regulated by chance. “Of course,” he muttered, half aloud, “these passages all lead there; but the delay is most vexatious.” As Butler spoke, he found that the alley had terminated, and that he was again in the centre of one of these underground chambers. This one

was square and not vaulted ; it resembled the other, however, in also having eight doors ; one in each corner, and one in the blank wall between. Butler, although somewhat uneasy, was not discouraged ; he again selected a door, and followed the passage into which it led. The choice was unfortunate ! The ramifications of the gallery which he had now entered were such as to baffle all calculation. Right and left, sometimes at right angles, sometimes opening in obliquely from behind, or diverging into a fan-like expansion in front, crossing and recrossing, separating and reuniting, all exactly similar in size, height, and general character, the interminable maze of windings and intersections branched off in every direction, utterly eluding the memory, and almost dazzling the sight by their multiplicity. It was indeed chance work now !

A considerable period of time (Butler did not know how much, for he had left his watch behind, but probably two or even three hours) had been occupied in threading these defiles, when suddenly turning an angle in the dull, uniform wall of stone round which he seemed doomed incessantly to wind, Butler, to his surprise as well as delight, found that he had again entered the octagonal chamber. Fatigued and heated with the exertion he had undergone, as well as with the confined atmosphere of these subterraneous

vaults, Butler sat down on the broken seat at the base of the pillar; and, pressing his hand on his forehead, on which the perspiration now stood in large drops, endeavoured to collect his thoughts.

He had emerged, it is true, from the confusion of his late wanderings, but was he much better off? Supposing, as before, that he selected one of the doors, and passed out of it, placing his marks as he went, how could he be sure that this would not lead to precisely the same result which had already attended his efforts? Nay, possibly even the door he had already marked, and the cross on which was plainly visible from where he sat, might after all *be* the real outlet, only in pursuing it he had made a wrong turning in some particular point. But, if so, where? Where the passage first separated into three? or in some one of the numerous intersections which had occurred before he turned back? if so, in which of these? And yet each and every of these must be gone through, in order to ascertain that this one of eight precisely similar outlets was not the right one. Butler felt truly, that hours upon hours would hardly suffice to exhaust these combinations; while, of course, there was always the possibility of his making a mistake similar to that which had already occurred, and proved so disastrous!

The fact was, that the labyrinth, for such it was, in which Butler now found himself, had been planned years before, for the express purpose of eluding investigation and pursuit. Originally, it had been nothing more than the quarry of the limestone from which the castle had been built. This stone, although it rapidly hardened by exposure to the air, had the property of being soft and easily worked underground: hence the quarry more resembled a mine than what we are familiar with under that name in this country, numerous supports and pillars of the native rock having been left standing to assist the working, and allow the ingress and egress of the labourers. No attention seemed to have been paid to these during the occupation of the castle in feudal times. After its demolition, however, and at a considerably later period in the history of the country, the place had been the resort of a gang of banditti by whom the district was then infested. Observing the advantage it would be to them for secreting their plunder, and also in case of detection and inquiry, its present occupants had greatly increased the extent of the excavation, adding numerous galleries and chambers, and at the same time multiplying the existing passages (which the softness of the rock enabled them to do with

ease), so as to form a maze or labyrinth of a most intricate and perplexed character. To any one penetrating it with the right clue, or to a large party furnished with lights, and communicating their relative position to each other by concerted signals, it was possible, with considerable time and trouble, to unravel the mysteries of these subterraneous regions; but, without such aid, the task was absolutely hopeless. Butler, by his discovery of the secret panel, and the main passage with which it communicated, and by taking the right-hand turning at the point where he became aware of the bifurcation of the passage had accidentally, as it were, hit the clue at one end, so as to bring him into the octagonal chamber, which served as a kind of centre to these ramifications; but for him to find his way out without assistance, was a task of almost incredible difficulty. And so, as we have said, that individual himself began to think.

Butler had sat for more than half an hour in the position we have described, recovering in some degree from the fatigue of his protracted search, but without advancing a single step in the discovery of any satisfactory mode of extricating himself from the trap in which he had thus, as it were, been caught. A thousand uneasy contemplations began to force them-

selves upon his mind. What if Mrs. Butler should have betrayed the secret door to the persons who doubtless had already entered the castle, and they should come and detect him here in the subterraneous chamber, or hunt him like a dog through the passages? What excuse could he in any way make for his presence there? How repel the corroboration which this must inevitably give to the charges his wife would advance against him, and the previous circumstances of Lucy's confinement? Or again, even if this did not take place, would he be better off? How was he ever to get out, to worm his way up to the daylight again through these tortuous and interminable galleries? At least it might be hours and hours, perhaps days first; he might expire of hunger meantime. "Why, bless me!" said Mr. Butler, half aloud, as he began to feel the full unpleasantness of these convictions, "it would be almost better for me if those people, whoever they are, did come. It's no hanging matter, after all; at worst, I should think, only a year or two's imprisonment; and really, unless I have some help, I do not see at present how I am to get out of this accursed hole. It seems absurd enough; in fact, there can be no real danger, it only wants a little patience perhaps; but still" —

It was not intended that the morsels of comfort which Mr. Butler, like many another coward, was thus endeavouring to suggest to his mind in contradiction of the not unfounded alarm which the untoward aspect of things was beginning to force upon him, should assume a consecutive or complete form. His last sentence was interrupted by a sudden reflection, which made him turn his looks, with an expression of blank horror, to the lamp which he had hitherto carried in his hand, but which on seating himself at the base of the pillar he had placed on the stone coping at his side. Strange, indeed, that he should never have thought of *that* before!

Butler now examined the lamp with close attention. At first its appearance reassured him; it still burnt brightly, with a clear and undiminished flame. But he was not satisfied; he opened it, and looked at the oil within. It was wasted perceptibly; it had sunk low, very low; there was enough left possibly to last an hour longer, certainly no more. At the end of that time—(the truth would not be shut out now; it would force itself upon him in its vividness and reality, it *would* be heard)—he would be alone in that fearful dungeon-house, and—in *entire darkness*.

In an agony of terror (for he saw it all now),

every fibre quivering with intense emotion, the miserable man started from his seat, and hurried towards the opening which first presented itself. It was life or death; he knew it now. Once imprisoned in these cold rayless vaults, and the soul should part from the body, the very flesh rot and wither on the lean bones, before human succour could reach him, or the cries of the famished and lonely captive be heard in the upper world of life. But he did not yet know his doom!

As Butler hastened towards one of the outlets of the chamber in which he was thus mysteriously confined, some inequality in the soil met him; his foot struck against it. He had advanced only a few paces from the stone seat on which he had been resting; the interruption was sudden, and his step hurried and unsteady. Attempting to recover himself, he lost his balance, and was thrown backwards with some violence; in falling, his head struck heavily against the projection of the stone. The blow stunned him, and he fell to the ground motionless and insensible.

A considerable time had elapsed before Butler again woke to a perception of surrounding objects. When he did so, his first thought was — the lamp. It was still burning, but feebly, very feebly; there

was an unmistakable difference between its light now, and that which he had observed before his fall. The allotted hour had indeed well-nigh run out!

With a wild, terrified look, Butler then gazed round the chamber in which he lay. It seemed to have grown in size: dark shadows travelled between him and the sombre walls, which glimmered stark and dim in the uncertain light; in their appointed places, like sentinels on his captivity, the eight doors of confusion bent their monotonous gaze upon his own. They seemed now to have a kind of fascination for him, something which absorbed even thought and motion; occasionally he turned from one to the other; at other times, his eyes would be riveted upon the one which was immediately opposite to him, as if it were a visible presence of evil which bound him, soul and body, within its thrall.

Possibly it was the mysterious and undefined imagery which the effects of the severe blow he had experienced, coupled with his own previous perception of his danger, had led Butler to associate with the general features of the chamber, which prevented his observing a still more tangible cause of apprehension. It was visible enough, too, and of a character sufficiently ominous. This was an im-

mense rat, which now stood peering at him from one corner of the room. A slight motion of Butler's disturbed the intruder, and he decamped; in a few minutes he returned again, accompanied with some three or four others; presently they began to come up thick and fast. Butler saw them now, and as if by intuition understood their errand. The sight for a moment sent the blood coursing back into his enfeebled frame; he started up, and strove to flee. But the violence of the blow had subdued even that indomitable will; a deadly faintness benumbed his whole frame; and sick at heart, and powerless, he sank back upon the stone settle which was to be his bier, the passage to the living charnel house of his self-wrought doom.

Meanwhile, with an unnatural lustre, the prelude of its final dissolution, the lamp, the sole companion of the succourless man, flickered up brightly within its chamber. As the light penetrated the dark corners and recesses of the vaulted room, it showed to the gaze of the miserable wretch by its side, tens, scores, hundreds of his foul assailants, legion upon legion, swarming on him from every quarter, tumbling, jostling, overrunning each other in their haste and hot speed, drawing every moment nearer and nearer, confronting, scenting, *touching* him.

And then, with an expiring effort, the flame leaped high and sank back in obscure darkness : and in the flesh, and within the very heart and vitals of the living man, unmoving, unresisting, fastened the teeth of that unclean multitude ;—type of the “ undying worm ” that shall be hereafter, and of the fires of an eternal generation.

After the long and tedious search we have described in a previous chapter, the party who had proceeded in quest of Butler, and who had accidentally followed the left-hand turning (which, in fact, both from its size and direction formed the apparent continuation of the passage), when Butler, guided by his supposed recollection, had gone to the right hand, which was the real clue, at length reached the octagon chamber. Scared by the torches and the numerous voices which were now heard approaching, the unclean animals who had executed such summary vengeance upon one whose crime could not have been reached by human laws, slunk away into their dens as if ashamed of the unhal-
lowed banquet on which they had been regaling. The lamp which the unhappy man had borne in his hand, and which still lay upon the ground near the base of

the stone pillar where it had fallen, showed that some terrible fatality had occurred. Scattered in various places near it lay portions of a man's clothing; one of them still bore the name of "J. Butler." A further search discovered some of the larger bones of the body, in one or two cases still entire, with the half-gnawed flesh clinging to some portions; in others, broken and polished clean and white by the hungry teeth which had fed upon them. These were lying upon the floor; those of smaller size had either disappeared altogether or been carried away by the marauders into their retreats.

Shortly, however, a general thrill of horror attracted the whole party (who were by this time with few exceptions assembled within the vaulted chamber) to one corner of that apartment. It was immediately under one of the eight doors, the same on which Butler had placed his mark when he first sallied forth on his unsuccessful expedition. In this place, some fifteen or twenty of the revellers in that hideous banquet, in spite of the noise and light which had dispelled their comrades, still remained congregated around some object, it could not at first be discovered what, snarling, wrangling, whimpering, fighting inch by inch, tooth and nail, for the possession of their prey. At length the cause be-

came apparent ; they had got the dead man's skull among them ! It was not until some severe blows had been administered, that they were forced to quit their hold ; then the object of so much contention was exposed to sight, — hair and flesh, vitality and intellect, stripped from it ; a grinning, ghastly shape, intolerable to heart and eye.

A minute or two had elapsed, and the spectators were still gazing in dismay at the sight thus presented to them, when the skull appeared suddenly agitated by some strange motion. The courage of the rude peasants, already overtaken by the exciting emotions of the last few hours, fairly gave way at this new spectacle, and they fled in precipitate haste from the chamber of such horrors. And still as they went, following as if in pursuit, rolling and tumbling from side to side (as the huge rat who occupied it, having licked up the last dainty morsels of the brain that had once toiled and plotted within, now sought an exit, for some time unsuccessfully, from its gloomy caverns), the disfigured skull seemed to dog their footsteps with an unholy mockery and derision ; as if, in the unclean inhabitant who now sat lord and master in the throne of reason, were typified that worst depravation of man's nature, the apostasy of misdirected powers, the demoniac possession of *intellect without love*.

CHAP. XVI.

"But in the dark grave all are still,
And none make supplication there;
No preacher moulds th' unstable will,
Nor seraph wafts the heart's warm prayer;
As the tree fell, so it lies."

WHITLOCK.

It was not until long after the confusion and excitement occasioned by the discovery of Butler's terrible fate had subsided, and the principal part of those engaged in the search had quitted the castle, that Mrs. Butler again showed any tokens of consciousness. Mr. Akehurst had sent a short note to his wife, apprising her of what had occurred, as well as of Mrs. Butler's state, and adding that it might be desirable that Lucy should be brought to the Schloss, if it could be done without injury to her own strength, which must stand in need of repose after so much peril and fatigue. At the same time it was uncertain, he added, whether Mrs. Butler's mind would again rouse itself from the state of in-

sensibility into which it had relapsed ; or, supposing this to be the case, whether it would be desirable under the circumstances that Lucy should be brought to her sight.

No answer had yet been received to this note, and the two English gentlemen remained seated in Mrs. Butler's room, waiting for the opportunity of any favourable change in her state. The German doctor, whose attendance was imperatively required elsewhere, had left the house an hour or two before, promising to return in the evening. At length, a slight sound within the closed curtains attracted the attention of both the gentlemen. Mrs. Butler was again sensible ; she had raised herself in bed, and uttered a few articulate sounds, of which, however, her companions were too late to catch the purport. But the hour had now arrived when speech and motion were to be no longer possible. The strong hand of paralysis was upon the sufferer. The half-uttered sentence remained unfinished ; and, sinking back feebly upon the pillows, she lay for ever mute and helpless, the rigid contraction of the features plainly showing that superior force against which the strong will and iron sinew of our race have so often struggled ineffectually.

A messenger was hurriedly despatched to acce-

lerate the doctor's return, if possible; meanwhile, her brother-in-law and Dr. Davis again stood, as they had done for great part of the morning, by Mrs. Butler's bedside, anxiously watching the frame and countenance on which death had already set its seal. A short observation led to the belief that notwithstanding the strong hold which the paralysis had taken upon her, the mind of the sufferer continued at present unimpaired, and this was confirmed by one or two questions which Dr. Davis put to her, and which she evidently followed and attempted to answer. The muscles of the tongue and palate, indeed, as well as those of the throat, chest, and arms, were entirely rigid, so that intelligible utterance was out of the question, as well as any sign, either with the hands or otherwise, which might have served as an equivalent. But the lips were still capable of a slight tremulous motion, which upon Dr. Davis speaking became decidedly marked, and showed that his listener was occupied in endeavouring to frame some reply. The eyes too were open, and retained the whole intelligence of life and health, coupled at the same time with a deep-seated expression of mournfulness and dejection, which it was almost impossible to witness without the mind of the beholder being

strongly affected for the fellow-being who thus bound hand and foot, as it were, by an invisible foe, and neither seeking nor expecting aid, lay, conscious only of its own heavy fault, under the very knife of the destroyer.

The worthy rector of Cheveleigh did not shrink from his task. He knew that while life and reason remained, it was his duty to urge on the mind of his former parishioner such topics as were suitable to her present state. Little heeded as these had been in prosperous times, and latterly wholly out of place during the dark crime in which she had been the tacit accomplice, they might now, he thought, in the evident remorse and change of purpose which Mrs. Butler had exhibited even before the hour of detection had arrived, be brought to bear upon this, her late repentance. Ascertaining, therefore, from time to time, in the same manner as before, that his listener was still sensible, Dr. Davis probed to their depths the wounds of that long seared heart and conscience. He spoke plainly to the dying woman, as the time befitted, of her life of heartlessness and selfishness ; of the mis-spent hours of vanity ; of the cold, hard character, unloving alike to God and man, which had at length borne its bitter fruit in the almost incredible guilt of the last two years, of which her

own confession had that morning been the witness. He spoke, indeed, of that confession, and still more of the happy refusal to concur in Butler's last proposal, which had arrested her foot on the very brink of the precipice, and thus not only saved her from participating in that hideous act of crime, but, by a Providential interference, been the means of preventing it altogether. But then, Dr. Davis asked, could this atone for the past? Even at the best, what did it amount to, but that she had at length felt some touch of natural affection, something of that instinct which leads even the untutored savage, nay, the very beasts of the field, the fiercest and most untamed, to tend and protect with jealous care the offspring to which they have given birth? Something, indeed, this was; but what Alps on Alps must not lie between such impulses, the mere groundwork and first rudiments of man's common being, and that existence which he is destined to lead hereafter, amid the seraph thrones of the unpolluted, and in the Heaven which is Love?

Dr. Davis paused for a few moments as he thus spoke, and looked to see that his listener was still sensible. But it required no careful scrutiny to ascertain this now. As after her dream of the evening before, the tide of natural feeling, so

long suppressed and pent up within the mother's heart, now again burst its barriers, and the tears of remorse and compunction poured in torrents from the hitherto dry eyes. The face, indeed, was so contracted with the paralysis that the usual action of the muscles in weeping was absent; but it was, perhaps, all the more touching on that account to watch the large hot drops without intermission stream from the eyes, and course each other in succession down the motionless and blanched cheek.

And now the minister of Heaven changed his tone. He still, indeed, for a few minutes spoke of the infinite peril and accorded punishments of sin; of the terrors of the inevitable judgment; of the gulf that separates the abodes of light from the prison-house of lost souls. But then he spoke, too, of a Love, no less infinite, which has bridged over that fearful chasm; of One, who knowing, as never living soul shall know, its dark mysteries, the restless energy of pain and the desolations of the lake of fire, had Himself, in long hours of anguish and a death of shame, wrought out man's deliverance; of the Good Shepherd, who will tenderly seek for, and bear home on His shoulders, even the sheep that hath erred astray the widest from the fold; of the faith, if only such there might be, which, even in

life's extreme agony, if coupled with penitence and self-abasement, hath never yet looked up to the gates of mercy unforgiven.

In the chamber to which Mrs. Butler had been removed, which happened not to be her own, there stood in a niche by the fireside, as is frequently the case in Roman Catholic countries, a rude wooden crucifix, not attached to the wall, but movable for the purposes of devotion when required to other places in the room. Dr. Davis was a staunch divine of the Church of England, but he was no bigot. As he now stood, deploring mentally that his penitent could give no sign of her having embraced the eternal Love without which remorse and confession are of no avail, his eye fell upon the sacred effigy, which seemed to embody in a visible form and shape the truths he had been endeavouring to enforce. "It is the emblem of man's salvation," he said, half aloud, "the sign of the common faith of Christendom; who shall forbid its lawful use?"

Reverently and gently, the worthy clergyman, as he spoke, moved the crucifix from its niche, and placed it to the mouth of the dying woman. The paralysis seemed for an instant to suspend its hold, as, with more power than they had hitherto shown, the lips, after moving for a few seconds apparently in

prayer, again came together, and fervently, but humbly, kissed the symbol of the all-atoning sacrifice.

A low rattle in the throat immediately followed, and the eyes closed in death for ever. But at the extreme moment, a slight, trembling figure had glided into the room unperceived; and, burying her face on one of the already stiffened hands which lay outside the coverlid, Lucy Akehurst mingled her intercessions, as of an angel, with those which prayed for the forgiveness of the soul as it travelled towards its long home.

Side by side, in that foreign land, lie the son and mother, so mysteriously parted through life, so strangely reunited in the arms of death. Rarely does any visitor from their own country penetrate to that remote locality. But the frocked peasants, as they wend their way homeward through the churchyard of St. Nicholas where the interment took place, breathe a hurried prayer for the repose of the two strangers, whose relationship, and something of whose history, the fireside gossip of the neighbourhood still recounts. And evermore, winter and summer, the shadows of the tall church travel over the grave; and a cypress, which Lucy planted, has

now shot up into a sturdy tree ; marking the spot where sleep together, to the end of time, the young impetuous heart, whose unpremeditated act was so heavily punished, and the offender of darker dye, from whose soul, by Heaven's special mercy, the crowning act of guilt was averted, and the dark night of obduracy and selfishness apparently at its last hour rolled away.

CHAP. XVII.

“ Over the sea-waves, salt and clear,
Over the dark hill-side,
By the fern-drest couch of the spotted deer,
And the brake where the panthers hide ;
To thee, to thee,
Over earth and sea,
I have toiled, my winsome bride.

“ Thy love hath been like the beacon-star
That shines with its silver crest
To the labouring mariners afar
From the storm-cloud’s ashen breast ;
I have seen, I have seen,
The fair star’s sheen,
And my soul hath found its rest.”

WHOMES.

THE best part of a twelvemonth had elapsed from the agitating events detailed in the last few chapters before Lucy had sufficiently recovered her health and spirits to allow of the marriage taking place, which Harcourt, in order to prevent the possibility of any new obstacle arising to their union, had eagerly pressed for at an earlier period, and which we feel it is due to our readers to notice as a *fait accompli*, before terminating this veracious narrative.

The wedding took place at Frederick Akehurst's house in the North of England. Recent family occurrences, as well as Lucy's own feelings, deprived the ceremony of much of the *éclat* which would otherwise have befitted the "Heiress of Cheveleigh;" but it was perhaps none the less satisfactory to the principal parties concerned on that account. The only circumstance which was of a nature at all calculated to mar the general hilarity of those present (although we cannot say that either the bride or the bridegroom took it much to heart), was an announcement made by Mr. Frederick Akehurst in the speech of which, as in duty bound, he delivered himself at the breakfast on this occasion. "Having now," he said, "wished with the most unfeigned sincerity all possible health and happiness to the bride and Mr. Harcourt (whom he had hardly yet forgiven for stealing away his niece's affections from himself), it now became his painful duty to apprise Mrs. Edgar Harcourt, as well as the assembled company in general, that the present was the first and last occasion on which she would ever be known under that designation."

Lucy appeared so seriously dismayed at this intelligence, that her uncle was obliged to relieve her from her suspense. "Why you see, Lucy," he said, "it's

well for young people like you that you have older heads to look after you. Now, I dare say, neither you nor Mr. Harcourt are at all aware that the settlement of the Cheveleigh property made by Lucy's grandfather, obliges any person who may marry the daughter of the illustrious house of Akehurst to assume the name and arms of that distinguished family. The penalties for disobedience are the forfeiture of the estate; the result of which, in the present case, would be that the property would most likely pass, not to myself, or perhaps I should have held my tongue, but to the heir-at-law (whoever he may be) of"—Frederick Akehurst was about to pronounce, most inappropriately to the present occasion, the ill-omened name of Butler; but he just stopped himself in time, and substituted, with some loss of explicitness, — "of other persons.

"Accordingly, Lucy, Mr. Harcourt having this morning done you the favour of changing your name, he will please have the further goodness, as soon as he can make it convenient after breakfast, to change his own. The settlement, indeed, allows six months for doing this; but it is always best to be on the safe side, so I have the papers all ready for the purpose; and shall now, by way of anticipation, pledge the company in a bumper to the health of Mr. and

Mrs. Edgar Akehurst, which, I must frankly confess, doesn't sound half so well as Harcourt."

Notwithstanding the unquestionable falling off which Frederick Akehurst had truly observed the new name exhibited in point of euphony, the toast was responded to with enthusiasm by all present, and not least of all by our old friend Mrs. Witherby, who was, of course, one of the party, and who, with her usual pertinacity in error, now drank off a sparkling bumper of champagne to the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Harkhurst; a performance which she followed up by a violent choking fit, occasioned either by her inexperience in that exciting beverage, or more probably by a general predisposition to feel her heart (as she expressed it) jumping into her mouth which the good lady had already experienced on more than one occasion that morning. Being treated for this ailment by pappings on the back and other appliances of domestic surgery, Mrs. Witherby appeared somewhat to recover; but, on Harcourt's rising to return thanks for himself and Lucy, underwent a relapse just at the most affecting part of our hero's speech, which was followed by a fit of quasi-hysteria, alternating between sobs and laughter, which always

occurred at the precise periods of the remaining addresses when they were most inappropriate, and finally so perplexed the good lady herself that she at length found herself incapable of distinguishing which was which.

The newly-married couple spent a few weeks in Scotland, and then returned, both by Lucy's and Harcourt's wish—we cannot consent, so near the close of our story, to call our hero by his new name—to settle down quietly at Cheveleigh: from which we may mention incidentally that the whole of Mr. Bilderbit's elaborate contrivances for the water-works had been in the meantime removed.

It was now once more October, so often an eventful month in the fortunes of those with whom our tale has been concerned; and the tall trees in the park were again beginning to assume their party-coloured hues, as Lucy and her husband drove under the rustic but gaily decorated arch which the good folk of Cheveleigh had constructed at the entrance of the village, and pursued their way between the park palings and up the steep hill to the lodge-gates, which one of the party so well remembered. “How much,” thought Lucy, “how very much, what a lifetime of emotions, how varied, how strange and terrible in some instances, how bright and happy in

others, have not these last four years brought forth ! Who could have pictured, even in the wildest dreams of fiction, when Charles and myself rode out with dear papa,—our last ride all together,—at this Lodge (alas ! and possibly on this very day), what would have happened before four short years had passed away ?” But Lucy was not in the humour to moralise long, and placing her small white hand in her husband’s, and looking up in his face with her own bright fond smile,—over which there was no cloud now,—she said, more in answer to her own thoughts than anything else : “ I am so very happy now, Edgar dear ; so very happy.”

And here we must quit the society of those with whom we have been so long conversant. That their happiness was indeed of long continuance, proportioned to the trials by which it had been assailed at an earlier period, and the firm and patient endurance by which these had been surmounted ; that the union of refined tastes, feelings, and pursuits opened every day new sources of enjoyment ; that the princely fortune of which they were now the undisturbed possessors appeared to them most valuable when it could ease the wants or mitigate the sufferings of the humble dependants in their vicinity, or strengthen, on a more extended scale of action, the

hands of those who were labouring, with no thought of earthly recompense, for the advancement of the higher interests of humanity; that in this devotion of heart and substance to the noblest aims they were neither formal nor sentimental; that Lucy's laugh was as bright and clear as ever, and Harcourt as keenly alive to the jest and humour of the passing hour; that no hearts more humble, or more unconscious of the interest and blessing which welcomed their very tread within the hamlet, ever passed from its rude street under the portals of the grey old church of Cheveleigh; that they shared hope, affection, sympathy, the very reality of life,—buoyed up as it were on each side, and prevented from merging into the selfishness of mere routine existence as well by the unforgotten romance of their young days as by the more thrilling emotions (coupled, as they fain must be, with the deep awe and reverence of the unseen) of that higher destiny for which man's feeble race is yet reserved;—that while Cheveleigh Court was the hospitable and genial home, for all who cared to resort to it, of every member and connection of the two families, their own inner life, unexplored by any stranger eye, was such as *they* may live who have bound heart, soul, and body together, in one imperishable aim

and purpose; that Harcourt and his fair young wife thus lived and loved is, we trust, only what our readers will already have anticipated from the premises, and what they will neither consider sentimental nor over-strained.

On one only subject was there any reserve between those who otherwise shared every thought in common. So much of Philip's history as related to his unfortunate rencontre with Charles, and the death of the latter in consequence, had never been disclosed to his sister; Harcourt had thought it useless to do so. On reaching England, his first care had been to ascertain for his own satisfaction the correctness of Philip's statement, although he felt little doubt of its complete authenticity. Upon inquiry, he found that old Sarah was dead. She had however previously to her decease made a full confession of the whole circumstances to the clergyman of the parish, from whom Harcourt upon explaining his own interest in the transaction readily obtained them. Numerous corroborative points, which Sarah had been too much agitated to explain to Philip, or which had escaped his memory, appeared to have been referred to by her in this confession; and, coupled with the remarkable likeness observed both by Harcourt and Lucy, left no doubt

upon the mind of the former of the correctness of his young companion's story.

For some time, indeed, there was still another memory of the past which strongly affected Lucy. Although Harcourt often expressed his wish to do so, she found it impossible to revisit Plas Newydd; the terror of that fearful conversation between Butler and Hilkiah Owen, although proved by the result to have been entirely unfounded, still hung upon her mind in gloomy colours, and indisposed her to return to the scene of so much suffering. We are happy to state, however, that this prejudice was ultimately overcome. On the day of the visit to Llanfihangel which we have narrated in a previous chapter, we were induced, on quitting the old church, to prolong our walk into the upper part of the vale of the Hirnant with which we had in past years been as familiar as Harcourt himself. On reaching Plas Newydd, we were pleased to observe that the exterior of the house, at any rate, had lost the sombre and neglected aspect which it had formerly exhibited. The Plas was no longer approached by the melancholy avenue of firs we have before described; the carriage-drive now swept through a tastefully-arranged shrubbery, and the lawn, bordered with gay flowers, and shorn to a close, fine

sward, was exquisite in its neatness and preservation. The house was evidently now the summer retreat of some family of opulence, and the few paces we had ventured to advance into the grounds for the purpose of observing the improvements fortunately enabled us to gain sight of one of its members. This was an exquisitely fair girl of about thirteen, who sat sketching, which she seemed to do with considerable assiduity if not success, on a bank of the garden overlooking the Hirnant. Her head was uncovered, and as the young fairy bent forward over her work she tossed back from time to time with an air of merry petulance the curls of bright flaxen hair which fell before her and occasionally interrupted her pursuit. At this moment a middle-aged English servant, apparently in the position of a head nurse, but with a much less starched and formidable expression in her good-tempered countenance than usually appertains to females of that age and condition, emerged hastily from the hall-door, calling at the top of her voice, "Miss Lucy, Miss Lucy Akehurst, Miss Lu—cy!" and appearing at last extremely surprised to find that the object of her search, whom she had overlooked in the earnestness of her vociferation, was quietly seated within a few yards of her. "Oh! Miss

Lucy, your mamma wants you ; you're to come and put your bonnet on di—rectly." Whereupon the young lady, who, as the day was rather chilly, appeared to have had some presentiment that her proceedings might not be altogether approved at head-quarters, bounded off with a gay laugh, allowing her blue eyes to rest for a moment upon the stranger as she passed with a half-comical, half-wondering expression which instantly revealed to us the Lucy Akehurst of former years, although their colouring and a shade of thoughtfulness which pervaded them bore probably more resemblance to our old friend Edgar Harcourt.

The reader may be glad to hear a few words before we finally conclude of two or three other of the personages who have figured in our narrative.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Akehurst were now frequent guests at Cheveleigh. The latter had always been regarded with much affection by her fair niece, while her husband's literary tastes, and the geographical and antiquarian knowledge which he brought to bear on the descriptions of the classical authors made his society no less welcome to Harcourt, who, in the intervals of his numerous avocations as squire

and magistrate, still found time to pursue his favourite studies with unabated ardour. By degrees, as years advanced, Frederick Akehurst's visits to the Continent became less frequent, and eventually he sold his property in the north of England, and settled down near his niece and Harcourt in the richer soil and more genial climate of the southern coast.

Dr. Davis returned to Cheveleigh shortly after the occurrences detailed in our last few chapters. In the course of a year or two a valuable living fell into Harcourt's gift, and was by him offered to Dr. Davis. But the old gentleman could not bring himself to leave the green turf grave under which the rosy-cheeked wife of his youth and manhood now slept so peaceably, or the fire-side in the old rectory by which they had so often sat and talked merrily together, and he declined the offer. The good man, too, loved his poor people at Cheveleigh; and, as there was no stint *now* in the stream of bounty from the Court, which flowed, almost before he could solicit it, for the sick, the aged, and the infirm of the hamlet, he found his own narrow income ample riches, and neither coveted nor would accept more.

Of the excellent Mrs. Witherby we have spoken so lately, that we will now only say that a handsome annuity, settled upon her by Harcourt's and Lucy's joint wish, placed her far above the necessity of any addition to her income from the sources on which she had previously relied. At Cheveleigh indeed she was frequently a visitor, and as popular as ever with young and old within its walls. Whether the advance of years made her in any degree less of a blunderer than heretofore has not been recorded. But at any rate, if the exercise of the faculty led to no worse consequences than it had done in paving the way for Lucy and Harcourt's day-dream of love, society may well afford to pardon it.

Of one other personage, after losing sight of him for some time, we again made the acquaintance in a singular and unexpected manner. Some eight or ten years ago, a small farmer, with a wife and thriving family, came to settle in the parish adjoining that which we ourselves honour with our residence. The name of the individual at once recurred to our memory as familiar, being, in fact, that of our worthy friend Mr. Andrew Jelps; and the surmises we were thus led to form were converted into a certainty, when a day or two afterwards his landlord and ours

brought us as a literary curiosity an epistle he had just received from his new tenant, applying, as it would appear, for the execution of some repairs upon the farm, but afflicted with such obliquities of expression, and disguised in such a strange orthography (as a specimen of which our friend pointed to the word "sponsABility," occurring about the middle of the letter), that it left the writer's intentions involved in no small doubt and uncertainty. But Mr. Jelps proved a good tenant notwithstanding. He had received from Lucy a handsome present in money on returning to his native land, and his frugal employment of this, with other savings, gradually accumulated a small capital on which the industrious Northumbrian determined to start for himself. Happening about this time to lose his mother, Mr. Jelps directed his thoughts towards the cherry-cheeked Gloucestershire damsel whom we have introduced to the reader's notice in a previous chapter, and with whom Mr. Jelps had, ever since the period of their fellow-service at what he was still pleased to call "the Slosh," maintained a precarious correspondence of a highly original character. We regret that from want of space we are unable to present our readers with these literary fragments. It resulted from them,

however, that Mr. Jelps, finding the affections of his correspondent still unengaged, succeeded in winning her hand, and after various migrations at length established himself as a fixture in the location we have referred to. Here Mr. Jelps lived and flourished in all prosperity, his wife presenting him annually with an addition to his family, of uncertain numbers, but all thriving and well-to-do; so that eventually the parish, being of limited dimensions, became as full of Jelpses as it was of anything else, excepting, perhaps, frogs and stickle-backs.

And thus incessantly across the stage of life sweep and mingle, in endless variety, the generations of the human race; shadowy forms, ever crossing and recrossing; those who had journeyed together the closest often severed the most widely in after life; all moving apparently in objectless confusion, but yet each fashioning, day by day, the imperishable lines of personal character, and all together working out, as the years of time run on, the mysterious web of man's destiny.

And thus have we, for a brief space, journeyed together, gentle reader, and thus must we now part company. And parting, we bid thee a kind farewell; happy if our feeble page hath beguiled, even for one

brief hour, the monotony of pain and solitude ; and still more so, if the deeply-erring hand which traced it hath been permitted to quicken into more habitual action within thee, the simple-hearted trust, the love, the unpriced obedience, which amid the fleeting shadows of the world's history, alone continue changeless and eternal.

THE END.

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